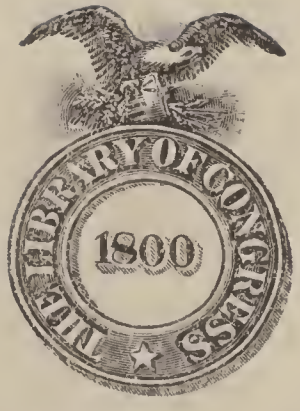
THE MOST WONDERFUL STORY

By AMY LE FEUVRE

AUTHOR OF

"PROBABLE SONS"



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"THERE HAD BEEN A LONG JOURNEY OF FOUR DAYS"

The Most Wonderful Story in the World

A LIFE OF CHRIST FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

BY

AMY LE FEUVRE

Author of "Probable Sons," "Teddy's Button," Etc.

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TO PARENTS

I AM sending out this simple story of our Lord's Life upon Earth, hoping that it may interest the very little ones. I have tried to write it, as I should like to read it to children of three or four, and upwards.

And so I have not touched so much upon the doctrinal teaching of our Lord, as upon His simple words; and some of the Parables that can be easily understood by children.

I have refrained from giving the Apostles their prefix of Saint, for I have kept to the Bible words as much as possible.

I have only tried to describe our Lord's Life in simple language. There is much that can be added by the reader if desired. But I hope that as the little ones listen to the "Old, old story" of Jesus and His love, that He may be more understood and loved by those who were so dear to His heart.

AMY LE FEUVRE.

"An Angel paused in his outward flight
With a seed of love, and truth, and light,
And cried: 'Oh, where shall this seed be sown
That it yield most fruit, when fully grown?'
The Saviour heard, and He said as He smiled:
'Plant it for Me in the heart of a child.'"

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I

THE BABY IN THE MANGER

I WANT to tell you of the most wonderful story in the world. Have you heard that there is a very happy Home for little children up above the blue sky?

It is where the good kind God lives, Who made your little body, and sent you to live with your father and mother.

God loves little children very much. He has a lot of little children now with Him in His Happy Home called Heaven. They are always happy and good. They never cry, and they never get hurt or ill. One day you will see them, I hope, and play with them.

Now in Heaven with God, lives His dear Son our Lord Jesus Christ. And my story has to do with Him. I want you to hear it from the beginning. All the people and children in the world were very unhappy. They were not happy and good as God wanted them to be. And they did not love God, and they forgot all about Him and His Happy Home called Heaven. They quarrelled, and cried, and hurt each other, and made each other very unhappy indeed. And God was very sorry for them.

He told them that unless they were good, they could never come and live with Him in Heaven.

A very wicked spirit called Satan, the devil, made them naughty. He did not like God, and he did not want them to go to Heaven. So one day God asked His dear Son Jesus if He would leave His Happy Home in the sky, and go down and save these people and children from being shut out of Heaven. Jesus said He would be very glad to go. He would try to make them want to be good, and would save them from the punishment of sin by being punished instead of them. You will understand more about this when you get older. And Jesus said He would like to come down on earth and be born as a little baby. He would come into the world just as you did.

And this is the story I am going to tell you now—the story of Jesus Christ, after He came into this world. I hope you know what this world means.

It is the place in which we live; the fields, and gardens, and streets, and houses; the hills, and the sea, and all the trees and flowers. It is a very big place, and a lot of people live in it; a great many more people than you have ever seen or heard of.

Now my story is beginning. Will you listen to it? A long, long way off from you now, there were once some little lambs playing about in a field, with their mothers. There was a kind man who always took care of them, and he was called a shepherd. He led them about every day to fields where the

grass was nice, and green; and he took them down to brooks of water, so that they might drink when they were thirsty. When it grew dark, he lighted a fire; because wolves, and foxes, and wild beasts would come out after dark, and try to kill the little lambs, and eat them for their supper, but they were very frightened of a fire, and always kept away, when they saw the red flames leaping up into the sky.

One very cold dark night, several shepherds were sitting over their fire together. The sheep were all lying down near them, and the little lambs were cuddling close to their mothers to keep safe and warm. Some of the shepherds were talking; others were sleeping as they took it in turns to watch their flocks. Suddenly one of them cried out:

"Look up into the sky! What is that?"

All the shepherds looked up. The sky was dark, but the stars were out. Just up above them, was a wonderful bright light; it grew brighter and brighter; it was brighter than candles, or gas, or electric light; brighter than the big fire in front of them, brighter than the sun itself!

And then they saw someone coming down from the sky in white shining dress, and two big white wings, and his face was smiling and beautiful. He came nearer and nearer them. The sheep and lambs kept quite still, but the shepherds were very frightened; they had never seen a man come down from the sky before. And one of them cried out, and

one of them started to run away, and some of them almost tumbled backwards; and then this beautiful shining person spoke to them, and they found that he had just come straight down from Heaven. He was one of God's angel messengers, who brings messages to us from God.

He spoke to them so gently and kindly, that they left off being frightened.

"Fear not!" he said.

And then he told them he was bringing them good news; he said it would bring joy to all the people, the men, and women, and little children, who heard it.

And what do you think he told them? That a little baby was just born in the town close to them, and the baby was going to be their King and Saviour. The shepherds had often heard of a wonderful King coming into the world one day, who would save them from all the wicked people who wanted to hurt them. And the angel told them that He had come already, and if they wanted to see Him, they would find Him lying in a manger in a stable; a little tiny baby dressed in swaddling clothes. The shepherds listened; and then suddenly, as he finished speaking, they heard the most wonderful music and singing. They looked up, and the whole sky was full of beautiful shining angels. They were all singing together, and their sweet voices sang out in the silent night these words:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

Wouldn't you like to have been there and heard them sing?

The shepherds loved it. When the song was finished, the angels went up higher and higher into the sky, behind the stars, until they reached Heaven.

Now it was all silent and still again; but the shepherds were very excited and pleased with the good news they had heard, and they said:

"Let us go and see this little Baby. We will go into the town and find Him, just as we were told."

Away they went as fast as they could. They left their sheep, but it was nearly daylight now. They hurried over the fields, and along the road; and then when they got into the town, they soon found the stable, and in it was the little Baby's mother, who had her arms round Him, and the father close by, and the little Baby Himself. Such a beautiful little Baby, with shining holy eyes, and a sweet smile on His tiny lips. The shepherds wondered He was not in a better house, but they were told the reason. The inn or house where people lodged, was crowded out with a lot of people who had come to stay for a day or two, and there was no room for the Baby's father and mother; so they had to put them into the stable with the cows and oxen, and Mary, the mother, had laid her darling Baby on the soft hay in the manger. He seemed quite happy. Now, do you know who this little

Baby was? He was God's dear Son, and His name was the Lord Jesus Christ. The poor shepherds were very happy when they saw Him. I think they knelt down, and kissed His tiny hands and feet, and then thanked God that He had sent His angels to tell them where they could find Him. And when at last they left the stable, they were so full of joy and wonder, that they told everyone they came across about the darling little Baby who was going to be their Saviour.

When the little Baby was eight days old, His father and mother took Him into the big town Jerusalem, four miles away, to a most beautiful Church there, called the Temple. It was there, He was given His Name Jesus, and presented to God. Mary was carrying her little Son very carefully in her arms up the beautiful marble steps of the Temple, when suddenly an old man called Simeon came towards her with outstretched arms. People made way for him to pass, for they knew him. He was an old man, and very good and holy. People always listened to him when he spoke, and they were silent now, for they knew that he was going to say words that God put into his mouth. He took the little Baby out of His mother's arms and held Him tenderly in his own. And then he looked up into the sky and thanked God for letting him see the little Baby who was going to save and bless the whole world. He told God he was ready to die now that he had seen Him. And then he gave the

little Baby back to His mother, and he blessed her, and her husband, and told her what the little Baby would do, when He grew up. His whole face shone with joy and delight as he spoke.

Mary and Joseph were very astonished at his words; they were just going on, when a very old woman, coming into the Temple suddenly, stopped directly she saw them, and began to pray aloud to God and praise Him. She was a very holy old woman and, like Simeon, lived so close to God that she was able to give people messages from Him.

She lived in the Temple, and God had told her who this little Baby was, so she turned to all the people near, and told them what she knew about Him. It was a wonderful time for Mary and Joseph. And when the service was over, and they took their little Baby back again, they talked together about their Child, and wondered at all that they had been told that day about Him. It seemed that a good many people knew that He was no ordinary child.

Only a day or two after that, they had some more visitors at the stable. The stars were out in the sky when they came. And one very big shining star was just above the stable. When Joseph saw a long procession coming up the highroad, he could not believe they were coming to see the little Baby, for these were not poor men like the shepherds, but very rich great men, and very clever. They came on camels, and had a lot of servants with them.

They had travelled a long, long way, and were strangers to everyone. Their clothes were made of silk and satin, and they carried bags, and caskets of gold, and all kinds of treasures. When Joseph saw the camels stop in the road outside, he went to the door, and there he saw these strangers all talking very excitedly and happily, and pointing up to the star. One of them came in at the door and said: "Is He here? The King of the Jews? We have seen His Star in the east, and are come to worship Him. We have been searching Jerusalem for Him. We went to Herod the King. He sent for us. He wanted to hear about the Star and where the Child would be born. And when the priests looked in their Holy Books, they said the King of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem. King Herod sent us on here to find the Baby, and told us to let him know when we had found Him, so that he could come and worship Him."

Then the other strangers came in. Mary was sitting down with her Baby on her lap, and when they saw Him, they fell down on their knees and worshipped Him; and then they brought out their presents—gold, and very precious scented herbs. They did not seem astonished to find Him in such a poor miserable shelter; they only thought of Him as the greatest King that had ever lived. Mary was learning not to be surprised at anything now. She smiled upon her little Baby, and gazed into His wonderful innocent eyes, and prayed to God that

He would take care of Him, and teach her how to bring Him up.

The strangers told her and her husband a wonderful thing. Just as they were starting from Jerusalem, they looked up into the sky, and saw the same Star that had been in their country far away, now moving on in front of them. They were very wise men, and knew all about the stars, so they followed it at once, and it moved across the sky till it came to the stable at Bethlehem. There it stopped, and they knew that they had found the little Child at last. I daresay they expected to find Him in a palace, but God wished Him to be born very poor, so that the poor and humble people would know that He had known and felt what poverty was like, and would be able to feel for them. Then these rich men went off to find lodgings for the night. I expect the people who kept the inn, and who had no room for Jesus, were very glad to take these strangers in. They knew they would be well paid for doing it.

In the night they had a dream. God came to them, and told them they were not to go back to Herod, and tell him where the little King was; and so the next morning, they took another road, and went back to their country by quite a different way.

And the very next night, Joseph had a wonderful dream. He woke up and told Mary about it at once. His face was grave, and his eyes anxious, as he told it to her.

"I saw an angel quite plainly," he said; "he came to me, and told me to get up, and take you and the Child away at once. We must go to Egypt and stay there, till he comes again to us, and tells us we can leave. He told me that our King Herod will try to kill our Baby."

"Let us go at once, if it is God's will," said Mary; "He will take care of us all."

She wrapped her little Baby up very warmly, for the nights were cold; and she knew their journey would be a long one. Joseph went across to the inn, and asked if he might have a donkey for Mary to ride upon, as she could not walk such a long way. Poor people always travelled on donkeys in those days. He got the donkey. The gold which the wise men had given them helped them now. I expect the donkey was in the stable with them. They did not wait for the morning to come, and the sun to rise, but they set off then and there, in the middle of the night. Poor Mary longed to get away from the cruel king, who wanted to kill her little Son. And as Joseph walked by her side, and looked up at the still starlit sky, I think he must have prayed earnestly to God, that He would take them safely on their way, and prevent any wicked people from hurting or harming them. He had asked no questions; he had obeyed the angel at once. I daresay, though they did not see them, they had a guard of angels round them, all through the lonely moors, and sandy deserts. They travelled very slowly, and

got food and shelter as best they could on the way. It was a rough journey for the tiny Baby, and His gentle young mother, but they reached Egypt at last, and Joseph found a little house to live in; and then he started work, for he was a carpenter, and could make all kinds of useful things for people to buy. The little Baby was quite safe now; every week He grew bigger and stronger. He cried sometimes, like little babies cry when they are uncomfortable, or hungry, or tired, but He never cried in temper, He was always smiling and happy; and if His mother did not want Him to play with things that might hurt Him, He gave them up to her at once. Sometimes Mary would look at Him, and wonder if He was listening to heavenly music, or seeing things up in Heaven that she did not see. His eyes were so rapt and sweet and serious, and His smiles so very, very sweet. She and Joseph felt that they were strangers in a strange land; and often used to talk about their own country, and wonder when they would be able to go back to it.

And then at last, one night, before their little Son could talk or walk, Joseph had another dream. His first dream had made him feel very unhappy when he woke up. This one made him feel very happy.

"The angel has come again to me," he said to Mary. "He has told me to get up, and take you and the Child back to the land of Israel, for the

wicked people who wanted to kill the Baby, are now dead, so there will be no more danger."

How glad Mary was! She soon got ready to leave her little home in Egypt. Now she would be seeing her friends and relations again; she would be able to show them her lovely Boy.

It was a much happier journey going back; but when it was at last over, and they were getting near Jerusalem, they met some people, who told them that the wicked King Herod's son was king now, instead of his father, who was dead.

Joseph felt anxious and afraid.

"He will remember that his father wanted to kill our Child," he said to Mary; and then they began asking the people questions, and they were told a terrible story.

It appeared that just after they had left Bethlehem, on their way to Egypt, Herod had sent his soldiers to kill every baby that they could find in Bethlehem; and not only all the babies in that town, but in the villages round. The wicked king had been expecting the wise men from the East, back in Jerusalem, to tell him where the little Baby lived who was born King of the Jews. And when they did not come, and he heard that they had gone home by a different way, he was very angry indeed. He was determined that the Holy Child should not live, so he told his soldiers to kill every baby in the neighborhood of Bethlehem. He was so afraid of a king growing up to take his throne from him.

He little thought how soon he would die, and how impossible it was to kill God's own dear Son before He willed it. It was a terrible story to hear! How all the dear little babies under two years old had been torn from their mothers' arms, and killed before their eyes. I expect Mary shuddered as she heard it, and clasped her own darling Child closer than ever to her breast.

Joseph felt as if he could not go back to Jerusalem or Bethlehem again. He did not know what to do for the best; and then once again he had a dream, and in it, God told him where to go. He turned away from Jerusalem, and went round it, and up the country a long way, till he came to a little village, or small town, called Nazareth. There he found a little house, and settled down. He had his carpenter's shop, and Mary had her Baby. The little Boy grew more beautiful in her eyes every day. He walked and talked now; He played with other children; He tried to help His father work in the shop. He was always happy and good. When He played with other little boys, He always let them choose the games; He never seemed to want to have His own way. If they teased or tried to quarrel with Him, He turned to them so lovingly and sweetly, that they had to stop doing it. He was always ready to trot about on errands for His mother, and He never, never once disobeyed her, or vexed her by doing wrong things. He loved to sit on her knee and talk about God and Heaven. She

used to look into His sweet little face as He knelt in prayer by her side, and wonder if He was an earth child at all, or if His little heart was always in Heaven, His proper Home.

And so some happy peaceful years passed, and our Lord Jesus Christ began to grow a big Boy.

"And through all His wondrous Childhood,
He would honor and obey,
Love and watch the lowly mother
In whose gentle arms He lay.
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He.

For He is our childhood's Pattern,
Day by day, like us, He grew.
He was little, weak, and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew.
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness."

II

THE BOY IN THE TEMPLE

IT is a lovely day in spring; the sun is shining in the blue sky; the birds are singing and the sweet-smelling flowers are all springing up in the fields, and on the sides of the green hills round the country village, where our Saviour lived when He was a little Boy. There is a great bustle in Our Lord's home; Joseph is in his best clothes; he is not working in his shop. That is shut up. A donkey is tied to the post outside the little house. Mary is almost too busy to eat her breakfast; she is packing up baskets of food, and shutting up the house, and getting herself ready for a journey. Every year she and Joseph went away from home for a week or longer. They left their little Boy behind, in the charge of some of their neighbors. The village was nearly empty during that time; all the people who were strong and well, went to the City of Jerusalem to keep the Feast of the Passover. It was held in the beautiful church called the Temple, where Jesus had been taken as a little Baby. And all the boys, as soon as they were thirteen years old, were expected to go with their fathers, and take part in the wonderful service that was held there.

Jesus knew all about this service; His mother and He sometimes talked about it. I daresay He often told His mother how much He would like to go to it. Sometimes in the summer evenings, when all Mary's work was done for the day, she would sit in the garden under the shade of the trees, and tell her little Son the story of the Passover.

And this is what she told Him.

Years and years ago, God's people lived in a strange country that did not belong to them. The country was called Egypt, and there was a cruel king in it, who made them work very hard for him, and gave them no money for doing it. They were whipped, and beaten, and ill-treated all day long; their little boy children were killed, and they were very, very unhappy. They cried to God; He sent them a man named Moses, to save them from the cruel king, and bring them right out of the country, into peace and safety. The king tried with all his might to keep them. He would not let them go, so God began to punish him in dreadful ways. He sent sickness and death among the animals and people; and at last, when the king was still obstinate, God told Moses that He would send one of His angels from Heaven, to kill the eldest child in every house in the land. Then Moses was told how God's people could be saved. Every father of a family must take a little lamb and kill it; then he must sprinkle his doorposts outside his house, and also sprinkle the top of the door with its blood. Late

in the evening, he must get all his family ready dressed for a long journey, for Moses was going to take them away from the wicked king that very same night. And while they were getting ready, the lamb was being cooked ready to be eaten for their last meal in Egypt. They were to eat, with their sticks in their hands, and their walking shoes on their feet, perfectly ready to start on their journey.

While they were doing this, the Angel of Death was flying from house to house.

But the angel passed over every house that had the blood sprinkled upon its door. Everybody was safe inside it. In all the other houses, the eldest child dropped down dead. The cruel king lost his eldest child as well as everyone else; and he was in such a state of terror and fright, that he sent a message to Moses to take God's people away, as quick as ever he could.

And this was done; they all escaped from the cruel king, and went a long, long way into a country that was given to them by God.

But God wanted the people to remember the night they were saved, and brought out of Egypt; so once every year they had to kill the lamb and eat it, and sprinkle its blood outside their houses. This was called the Feast of the Passover, and everyone who could, went up to Jerusalem to take part in the Feast. It was called the "Passover," because it was kept in memory of the night when

the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the people who had sprinkled the blood on their doors, and eaten the lamb, as God had told them to do.

As Mary told this story to her Son, she little thought how much it had to do with Him.

She did not understand then, that He was one day going to be killed like the lamb, so that the whole world might be saved from death, and have eternal life.

And I do not think that when He was a little Boy, Jesus knew this Himself. We are not told that He did. The Lord Jesus would listen with grave and earnest face to this story. He seemed so wise and thoughtful for His years, and so anxious and eager to take part in it, that though He was now only twelve years old, His father had decided to take Him with them to the Feast. There was a glad eager light in the Boy's eyes, as He helped His mother in her preparations for the journey. At last they started; Mary seated herself on the donkey, and her parcels of provisions were packed up and strapped to it; they did not journey alone this time, as they had done when they fled into Egypt, and Jesus was a little Baby. Now, whole families of their friends and neighbors were going along the same road; the children and women riding on donkeys; the husbands and grown-up sons walking by their sides, and leading the donkeys along. How the boys loved it! They would go across wide flat moors or plains, with corn-fields stretching on either

side; then across a river to the hills beyond. When night came on, they would camp out, sometimes by a well of water, or under some rocks or palm trees. And at last, after about four days' travelling, they would catch sight of the gold roof, and marble walls of the Temple rising high above the walls of Jerusalem, and shining in the sun. We can picture our Lord's eager delight when He first saw Jerusalem, the Holy City. His mother Mary had another joy as they began to get near to Jerusalem. In one of the little villages outside Jerusalem she had a cousin living; she was much older than Mary, but she had a little boy, only about six months older than our Lord, and his name was John.

I do not expect the little boys had ever met each other before this time; they lived so far away from each other; John's father was a priest, and he used to help in the Church services. Little John never mixed with other children; he was brought up differently to other boys. His parents were very good and holy people, and God sent an angel when little John was born, to tell them that He was going to make him one of His special servants and messengers; and that he must be brought up in a very careful and special way. So they trained him as God wished. Later on, we shall hear more about him, but I am quite sure they would take him to the Passover as soon as he was old enough; and perhaps this was his first appearance at Jerusalem. We can imagine how glad Mary was to meet her

cousin again; how they talked about their darling sons; and how the boys made friends with each other at once, and talked together of the wonderful visit they were going to make. And then Jerusalem was reached, and they all took part in the Temple services, and in the Feast of the Passover. There were thousands of people in Jerusalem; rich people and poor; and many enjoyed meeting their friends and acquaintances whom they never saw at any other time but this. Our Lord Jesus, like many other boys of His age, was allowed to go about by Himself, and when the day came for them to go home, His mother did not trouble to keep Him by her side; and she and Joseph were so taken up with the company of their friends, that she did not miss Him upon the road home. But when the day came to an end, and dusk set in, she began to look about for Him. She went to little John's mother, but found that she had not seen Him; then she went to some other relations of hers; they knew nothing of Him; then she and Joseph began to get frightened; they knew that robbers came down from the hills, and robbed and killed travellers, if they were alone and unprotected. Her Child was only a little Boy; He might have taken a wrong turning and got lost; He might have fallen into the river and been drowned; He might have had a bad tumble and hurt Himself. She was very angry with herself for not having thought about Him, and seen that He was with her,

when they left Jerusalem. I expect she thought He had gone on in front with His little cousin John.

"We must go back to Jerusalem at once and look for Him," she said to Joseph. "I could not go to sleep to-night in peace, if He were not with us."

So Joseph took her back; it was a long day's journey to Jerusalem, and by the time they had reached the town again, it was three days since they had seen their little Son. They did not look about the streets for Him. Mary knew He would not be there. They went straight back to the Temple. She reminded her husband how the Boy seemed as if He could not tear Himself away from God's House. The other boys liked to wander about the town looking into the shops, and buying things at the bazaars. Jesus seemed wrapped up in the beauty and silence of the Temple. As they dragged their tired feet up the Temple steps, Mary and Joseph asked everyone they met, if they had seen their little Son.

And at last someone told them that there was a child in a classroom, where some good and learned men sat, and taught the Bible to any who wanted to learn it.

"He is astonishing them all by the wonderful questions He asks them! They have never had such a clever pupil before."

"Oh, that must be Him," said Mary, and trembling with eagerness, she hurried into the room, where the class was being held. She was very tired

and anxious, and when she saw her dear little Son in the midst of the clever old scholars, sitting there with a heavenly smile upon His face, and an eager light in His beautiful eyes, she did not draw Him into her arms and kiss Him, as many a mother would have done, but she scolded Him. She was tired and anxious, and a little cross. He had never, never given her a moment's anxiety before; and she could not understand it now.

She said: "Why have you behaved like this? We have been looking everywhere for you. We have been miserably unhappy about you."

He got up from His seat at once, and went up to her. Then He put His little hand very gently into hers, and looking up at her with a sweet tender look in His eyes, He said softly:

"Why have you been looking for Me? Don't you know that I must be about My Father's business?"

His mother and father looked at Him with puzzled eyes. They could not understand what He meant. But they said no more to Him, only took Him away with them. And He went with them quietly. He had much to think over during His homeward journey. The remembrance of the beautiful Temple, its services, and the many truths He had been learning from the good teachers there, filled His heart and mind.

Mary was full of thought, too. What did He mean by His Father's business? He did not mean

Joseph's business. He was not learning about carpentering in the Temple. And then she remembered how several times He had called God His Father, and she began to see that His desire to learn more about God and Heaven, was perhaps the business His father, God, wanted Him to do. She did not say anything about this; she only treasured up in her heart all His little sayings, and remembered them all her life long.

And Jesus went back to His village home and played as usual with the other children in the streets, and upon the hills. And He helped His father more and more in his workshop, and worked for His mother, and obeyed her in all things. We are told He grew bigger and taller; and as He grew bigger, He grew more wise, more holy, more like God.

Everybody loved Him in the village, and it was because He loved everyone. If boys fought together, or a big boy bullied a little one, the little boy always turned to Jesus. He would put His arms round him and comfort him, and then He would talk so sweetly and lovingly to the bully, or to the one who was in fault, that they could not be angry any more. He used to carry burdens for everyone, if they were weak, and old, and tired. He never said a cross or angry word to anyone. He was always smiling and happy. He loved to be among the flowers in the fields; and sometimes, after wandering away by Himself for a long time, would come

home with such shining eyes, and such a rapt smile on His lips, that His mother would ask Him whom he had met.

"I have been talking with My Father," He would say. And Mary would look at Him with hushed, adoring eyes, and say to herself:

"That means, He has been praying to God!"

III

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

WE have talked a little about Jesus Christ's cousin John. When he was a little baby, God told his parents that he would be a great preacher when he grew up; and that he would prepare everybody for the coming of God's Son, the Christ, whom all the Jews expected one day to come and rule and reign over them. When John grew up, he went away by himself into a lonely desert; a place with hills, and rocks, and caves, but with no houses or people in it. He lived in a cave; he ate the fruit on the trees; and the honey which the bees made, and stored away in holes in the rocks. He also ate the dried bodies of a large insect called a locust. He had a very long beard and very long hair. He had never had his hair cut in all his life. He dressed himself in a rough hairy garment made of camel's skin, and when he one day came out towards the edge of the desert, and began to speak to the first people he saw, I expect they were rather frightened at his looks.

But they soon told their friends, and neighbors, that a strange man, a prophet, was beginning to

preach; and crowds went out of the towns and villages to see and hear him. Children, boys and girls, men and women, rich and poor, all flocked out to the desert. They were curious to see this strange man. They knew he was different to themselves. God had told him he must be. God had spoken to him, and told him what to say to the people; and he would begin all his sermons or talks with crying out in a very loud voice:

"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He told everyone they must be sorry for their sins, and give them up, and turn to God. And then he told them that Someone much greater and more holy than he was, was coming after him, and that He was Christ the Son of God.

Everyone began to be interested. They listened to him, and many of them began to be sorry that they had not been pleasing God, only pleasing themselves, and they asked John to help them and tell them what to do. He took them down to a rushing river; and in a quiet spot, where the water made a shallow pool, he told the people who were really sorry for being wicked, to walk into the water with him. He wanted to teach them, that just as our bodies are washed by clean water, so their hearts must be washed clean by God. And he called this baptizing them. Hundreds of people were baptized in the river—soldiers, and tax collectors, and travellers, and merchants, and poor working men. Every day fresh people came to hear

John preach, and to be baptized, and they called John, John the Baptist.

One day a young man came up among the crowds, and listened very quietly and attentively to John. Then He stepped up in His turn, and told John He would like to be baptized. John looked at Him. He seemed quite a stranger to him, but there was something so sweet about His face and Voice, such an earnest, holy look in His eyes, that he knew at once He was ready for baptism. He took Him into the water; and now something very wonderful happened. After He had been baptized, He came up out of the river praying. He was looking up into the sky and speaking to God, and John could not take his eyes off Him. Suddenly John saw a flash of light in the sky, as if it were opening; and then a shining, beautiful white dove seemed to fly right down, and rest upon His Head. At the same time a Voice was heard. Not John's voice, or any voice in the crowd on the river's bank. It came right down from the opening in the sky, from which the beautiful dove had come down. And the Voice said these words:

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

It was the Voice of God. John knew at that same moment whom he had been baptizing. It was Jesus Christ the Son of God. John had been told by God before, that when he saw a dove come down from the sky, and rest upon anyone, that person was

Christ, the One for whom he had been preparing the way. And now God's Voice made it quite clear.

Yes, this quiet young man was Jesus. He was grown up now; and God had told Him that the time had come for Him to leave His village home, and begin His work. So he had left His mother and come out to the Wilderness.

He and John had not met each other since they were little boys. They were strangers to each other; but now John knew who He was. Directly our Lord Jesus was baptized, He slipped away quietly through the crowds of people, and disappeared. He did not go home. God wished Him to go right away from everyone by Himself, and stay away for a long time. So He now walked away from John, along the river's side for a long, long way, until He came to very lonely country. It was a wild wilderness, and not at all a nice place to stay in. Jesus went right into it, till He was miles and miles away from any house or people. There were great mountains and rocks all round Him. At night He heard the roars and howls of wild beasts roaming about in search of something to eat. No beautiful flowers or trees with fruit on them grew in this wilderness. It was full of stones, and sand, and dry, withered bushes. In the day, the hot sun shone so fiercely down, that it seemed to scorch and burn everything it touched. At night it was very cold, and our Lord had only the bare ground to sleep upon, and hard, rough stones for His pillows. There was no

food to be got anywhere. He was soon cold and hungry and tired.

At the beginning of the time, Jesus had been getting very close to God. He was preparing Himself for the trials and temptations and troubles that were coming to Him now. He talked to God and God talked to Him; and when He was praying, He did not seem to feel His hunger, or the cold. But by and by there came to our Lord the wicked spirit called Satan. He had always been God's enemy, and he hated His dear Son. He was always trying to keep people from loving God, and pleasing Him. He wanted to prevent them from going to Heaven; and he hated Jesus Christ coming into the world. He was afraid people would love Him and follow Him, and Satan wanted to keep them away from Him. Satan is still in the world now; we can't see him, but he whispers wicked thoughts into our minds, and shows us how to be naughty. He makes boys and girls quarrel, and lose their tempers and sulk, and tell lies. He is always tempting people to do wrong. All the time that Jesus had been a little Boy, Satan had tried to make Him naughty. But he had never once done it. I think that as a little Child, Jesus had so many angels guarding Him, that Satan had not been able to get near Him. He had tried, and tried, to make Him disobedient and untruthful, but it was of no use. Though he tried his hardest, Satan had never been able to make Jesus sin. Now

it was God's will that Satan should try to tempt Jesus again, and the way was made easy for him to do it. I think God for a little time, withdrew the band of guardian angels. He wanted Satan to know that however strong he was, Jesus Christ was stronger, and that it was quite impossible, being the Son of God, for Him to give way to Satan, and do anything wrong. Jesus was lonely, and tired, and weak from hunger. Satan thought he had a very good chance of tempting Him to be wicked.

And so he waited till Jesus was really fainting from hunger; and then he came to Him, and pointing to the heaps of stones close by, he said:

"If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Satan reminded Jesus that God could do everything, and that if He were the Son of God, He could too. Why should He go hungry, when He was able to turn stones into bread in one minute? Jesus knew that it was God's will that He should eat nothing in the Wilderness, and it would be wrong to disobey God's will. He had always trusted in God to supply His wants. So He said very quietly:

"'It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"

Then Satan did a very wonderful thing. He is able to do things that we cannot do; and Jesus suddenly found Himself caught away through the

air, and put upon one of the very small towers of the beautiful Temple in Jerusalem. He stood on the very top of it, and Satan was close beside Him. They were so high up, that the streets, and houses, and people, in Jerusalem, were all far below them, and looked like little dots on the ground.

"Now," said Satan, "if you're the Son of God throw yourself down. Show me what you can do. It is written in the Bible that God gives you angels to take care of you, and bear you up safely, so trust yourself to them."

Would it have been wrong for Jesus to do this? Yes, for God did not want Him to show His power in such a way. Jesus had never been proud or boastful as a little Boy, and He was not going to be so now.

He answered very quietly:

"It is written again, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God!'"

Then Satan tried to tempt Him once more. He knew that Jesus had come into the world to be a king, and he knew that lots of the people were so wicked, that they would prevent Jesus being King over them. Satan himself would keep them from being His subjects. Now he brought Jesus up to the top of an enormously high mountain. It seemed to look over the whole world. They could see country after country, and kingdom after kingdom, all stretched out below them. They saw the most beautiful palaces and gardens, and temples; they saw

kings with their bands of soldiers, with their armor all shining in the sun; and then Satan turned to Jesus:

"You want to be King; you can be King over all these! All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me."

Jesus knew that He would have a very difficult time in getting a kingdom in this world. Satan was going to try to turn everyone against Him; he was going to fight against Him, with all his might and strength. If Jesus worshipped Satan, He would have no difficulties at all; people would crowd to Him, and make Him their King.

Again Jesus spoke:

"Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'"

It was no good; Satan saw that He could get no power over Jesus. He could not make Him do or say a wrong thing; and in great anger he went away.

The time of temptation was over. Beautiful white shining angels flew down from Heaven. Now Jesus could eat, and drink, and rest Himself. I expect the angels fed Him, and sheltered Him from the hot sun, and warmed Him when it grew cold at night. How delighted they must have been to come down from Heaven, and wait upon their Lord and Master!

Jesus had been in the Wilderness nearly six weeks.

When He came away, He felt strengthened and ready to begin His Work. He had been baptized; He had shown Satan that He was stronger than he was, and would not sin; and now He was going to begin to teach people, and help them to love God. So when He came out of the Wilderness, He went back to Galilee. I expect His mother tried to get Him to come home again and live with her; but He had to tell her very gently and lovingly that now she must give Him up, and let Him do "His Father's business." And He began to go about the villages preaching in the same way that John had done, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

One sunny morning, Jesus walked down to the seashore. The great blue water stretched away from the sand, the little fishing boats were drawn up on the beach. Some fishermen had been out all night catching fish. Now they were sitting down in their boat, which was fastened to the beach, mending their nets. There were great holes in them, and they wanted to have their nets ready, for when they went out fishing the next time. A little farther along the shore, two young men, who were brothers, were just casting their nets into the sea.

Jesus came very near these two brothers; and then He suddenly called them to Him.

"Follow Me," He said; "I will make you fishers of men."

Now these two men had seen Jesus before. One

of them, called Andrew, had been listening to John the Baptist, when he was preaching, and Jesus had passed by. John suddenly broke off his sermon, and pointing to Jesus, he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." The young fisherman was curious; he and another young fellow followed Jesus; and suddenly Jesus turned round, and asked them what they wanted. Andrew said very meekly: "Master, where do You live?"

Jesus said, "Come and see," but I am sure He smiled when He spoke, and that smile made the young men want to know Him. It was so full of love and tenderness. They went to the house where He was lodging, and stayed with Him all day, listening to His talk. Then Andrew went home, and was so full of this wonderful stranger, that he told his brother Peter about Him, and brought him to Jesus.

"Come," he said. "We have found The Christ."

That was some little time ago; now when Jesus called to them with His wonderful smile, their hearts leaped with joy. They had often talked about Him, since they had first seen Him; they had said to each other how much they would like to live with Him, and go about with Him, wherever He went. Only they did not think He would want them. Now they knew that He did want them. They dashed down their nets. Who would want to go fishing when Jesus wanted them to follow Him! They left their boats; they did not go home to tidy

"'LET DOWN YOUR NET AND FISH'"

themselves up—no—they left everything, forgot everything, except this one thing: Jesus had said to them "Follow Me," and they meant to do it. Away they went, with glad hearts!

Jesus still continued His walk along the seashore. He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, and there were a good many fishermen about. He very soon came to the men in the boat, who were mending their nets. He stopped, looked at them in His loving way, and called to the two young men, James and John, to follow Him. They jumped out of the boat, leaving their father, and joined Peter and Andrew. Now Jesus Christ had four young men, whom He called His disciples. They went everywhere with Him, and He taught them a great deal about God, and tried to explain to them why He had come down to earth, and what He was going to do. They all loved Him very much; they could not help it. He was so strong and true and tender! He never lost His temper when they did stupid things, and if they were tired, or cross, or unhappy, He comforted and cheered them up. These young fishermen were not the only ones who became His disciples. One day Jesus called to a man collecting money for taxes. He was sitting down with his money all round him, and yet directly he heard Jesus say "Follow Me," he jumped up from his seat instantly, and followed Him. His name was Matthew. There were seven others. Perhaps some of them came to Jesus of their own accord; we are not told. But they all

went about with Him, everywhere, and they all loved Him, and believed in Him. Would you not like to have been one of them? One day Jesus was invited to a wedding, and His disciples were invited too.

The wedding was taking place in a little village called Cana, not very far from Jesus' old home Nazareth. I think the bride or bridegroom must have been some relation of Jesus' mother, or they might have been great friends. In any case, she was invited, too; and I should think she must have been very glad to see her dear Son again. She had never left off missing Him, and was very glad and proud when she heard people talking about Him. "He is going to be a great Man," she would say. I think she must have told her friends, that it was a great honor for Jesus Christ to come to their wedding. They were very glad to have Him. As a little Boy, and a young Man, Jesus Christ had been liked by everyone who knew Him. Now, He and His disciples were sitting down as guests, at the wedding feast. There was a lot of nice food to eat, and wine to drink, but there were a great many people there, and soon, to the family's dismay, the wine began to run short. There wasn't enough to go round. Mary was let into the secret. Perhaps one of the servants who was waiting at table told her; perhaps the bridegroom's mother might have whispered to her in her anxiety. She wanted to help them if she could. She had been accustomed to turn to Jesus, if she

was in any difficulty, so she now slipped over to where He was sitting, and whispered to Him that there was no wine. Something seemed to tell her that He would help them about it. And now that He was going about preaching, she thought He might begin to do wonderful things, to show that He was the Son of God.

He looked at her gravely; He knew that she expected Him to show His power now, but though she was His mother, she ought not to have told Him when to do things. He said very quietly that the time had not yet come for Him to do anything. Mary slipped quietly back to her seat, but on the way, she spoke to the servants who were waiting at table. She pointed to our Lord, and said: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

She knew that Jesus had never failed to help anyone in need. And, though it may seem a little thing to us, it would have brought great grief, and a certain amount of disgrace, to the poor bridegroom, if some of his guests had gone away not having been offered any wine.

Mary was not wrong to hope for Jesus' help. Near the door of the room were six great stone water-pots. They were kept there to hold water for washing travellers' feet when they came in from a long walk, or journey, and washing their hands when they wanted to do so. The Jews were very clean people, and always used to wash their hands

and feet, before they ate their meals. These water-pots were empty now. The water had been used out of them. Jesus turned round very quietly, and beckoned one of the servants to Him. He went at once. Then He said in a low tone, but in a tone of command:

"Fill the water-pots with water."

The servants hurried at once to do what He told them. The guests were so busy eating, and talking, and laughing, that they did not see what was going on; but Mary did. Her eyes never left her Son's face. A smile came to her lips now. She saw that Jesus was going to help.

When the water-pots were full to the brim, of water, Jesus spoke to the servants again:

"Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast."

Now, would the servants obey Him? It was a very strange thing to be told to do.

Nobody drank water in that country. It was generally rather impure and unwholesome. The juice of the grape, kept for some time, made very nice wine, and everyone always drank it.

The governor of the feast was the bridegroom's friend, who was arranging everything for him, and looking after the comfort of his guests. He was always supposed to be served first, so that he could taste the different wines and dishes, and see if they were nice enough to give to the guests. The servants might have felt afraid of offering plain water

to the governor; but something in Jesus' voice and manner made them feel it would be all right. They had been told by Mary to obey Him; and without a word, they hoisted the great jars upon their shoulders, marched up the room, and began pouring out into the governor's cup. As they poured, they saw it was water no longer, but beautiful wine. Then they went round, and filled all the guests' empty cups. There was enough for everyone, and to spare. The governor liked his wine so much, that he called the bridegroom to him and said:

"Everybody gives their best wine at the beginning of the feast, and then when men have well drunk, that which is worse. Thou hast kept the good wine till now."

He meant by that, that the wine which Jesus had made out of the plain water, was much better and nicer than the wine they had first. How astonished the bridegroom and his family must have been! How grateful to Jesus for helping them in their need! I am sure the news soon spread from one to another. "Where had this wine come from?" "Out of water-pots." "One of the guests had told the servants to fill the pots with water and then pour it out." "Who was He?" "Jesus, the Son of Mary, who was here." "He had lately been going about the villages, telling the people strange and wonderful things about God and Himself." "He must be a prophet then. He had worked a miracle. No one could make wine out of water

unless God helped Him!" And so the people all talked and wondered. It was the first miracle that Jesus had done, but it was not the last; and every day now, He seemed to do something more wonderful.

IV

HEALING THE SICK

AFTER the wedding was over, Jesus took His disciples to Capernaum, and His mother and some of His relations went with Him. I expect they wanted to see if He would do any more wonderful things, but He did not stay in that little town very long. He talked, of course, to the people, and preached to them about God and His Love, and then it was time to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover. You remember how Jesus had gone up to His first Passover when He was a little Boy of twelve years old. Now he was much older, and God was telling Him to use His Power as Son of God, to show everyone that He was no common man, but that He had been sent down from Heaven for a purpose.

When He and His disciples arrived in Jerusalem, they found the town very full and crowded, as it always was at this time. And some people found it a very good time to make money. They took all the sheep and oxen they had to sell, and doves, and lots of shop wares; and instead of selling them outside in the street, they actually took them into the outside part of the Temple, God's House! Nobody seemed to mind; so instead of a

quiet hushed place where people began to think of God, and pray to Him, and prepare themselves to worship Him, now it was just a market-place. The shopkeepers knew everybody was bound to pass that way into the Temple, and so they would see their goods and buy them; the beautiful courtyard, with its marble floors, and pillars, was now crowded with a noisy bustling crowd, all buying, and selling, and shouting out to each other. The oxen were stamping about, and bellowing, and the sheep bleating. People could not hear themselves speak for the noise and din; and as for thinking of the solemn Passover, they were only thinking of what they meant to buy, and quarrelling with those who were trying to cheat them.

Jesus looked round upon all this, with grief, and sorrow, and Holy anger in His heart. Was this how people were treating the Holy House of God? He must stop it at once. * * * And suddenly, in the midst of all the noise and confusion, the people saw a strange young man, holding a scourge or whip of small cords in His Hand, and driving out with great quickness and strength, all the persons who were selling. The oxen and sheep followed; the people who had the doves in their cages, were told to take them out immediately; the people who changed money—all were driven out of the Temple's courtyard—and as He drove them out, Jesus said in a loud voice so that everyone could hear Him:

"It is written, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.'"

Jesus astonished everyone very much by what He did, and made them very angry. But He never minded people being angry; He was, of course, afraid of no one, and always said, and did, what was right, however people disliked it.

And He felt it was right to show them how wicked they were to buy and sell, and make such a noise, in God's Holy House.

The Priests of the Temple were so angry when they heard of what Jesus had done, that they made up their minds they would try to kill Him, but they were rather afraid of all the people, because they were crowding after Jesus everywhere now, and believed that God had sent Him to preach to them. They thought He was a great prophet.

When the Passover was over, and Jesus had returned into His own part of the country again, the village people began to follow Him about. He taught and preached to them in the little village churches which were called synagogues, and now He began to do something wonderful. This was to make sick people well. There was a man one day, who came into church, and he had a terrible illness. He would fall into fits of passion, and try to kill himself, or anyone who came near him. Sometimes he was quiet for a little time, and just like anyone else; then this fit would come upon

him, and no one could hold him or do anything with him. It was supposed in those days that the wicked devil, Satan, who had tempted Jesus in the Wilderness, had sent a very wicked spirit into this poor man's body, and he made him say wicked words and do wicked things. Well—this man had crept into church, and listened quietly, while Jesus was reading the Bible, and explaining it. Then suddenly he cried out in a loud voice:

"Let us alone. What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

The people round him were very frightened, but Jesus held up His hand, and in His grave voice, He said rather sternly:

"Hold thy peace, and come out of him."

He spoke to the wicked spirit in the man, and the spirit had to obey Jesus. He threw the man down on the floor, and then left him, and went back to Satan; and the man got up quite quiet, and gentle, and was cured for ever from that day. He never had those terrible fits again. The people were awestruck. They could not understand how Jesus could cure the poor man by a word. They said to each other:

"What power He must have, that even wicked spirits do what He tells them, and come out of a poor afflicted man."

They went out of church and told everybody

about it, and soon all the villages round began to hear of Jesus, and to talk about Him.

Just after Jesus had left the little church, He went to Simon Peter's home. Though Peter followed Jesus about everywhere, he did not give up his home altogether, and often went back to his wife, and sometimes went out in his boat, and caught fish for her. Now Jesus was coming to his house to rest, and have some food, and sleep there. When they got to the house, Peter's wife came to the door crying. She was in great trouble. Her mother was staying with her, and had suddenly been taken very ill. She had caught a fever, and was so ill that they thought she was dying. No doctor could do anything. Then Peter turned to Jesus; he and his wife asked Him if He would come in and see her. He went in at once. She had been tossing about in bed, not knowing anyone, but moaning and crying. Her head and hands were as hot as fire; she seemed as if she could not keep still. Jesus stooped over her, and laid His strong tender hand upon her hot restless one. Then He said a few words, and told the fever to leave her. Instantly the old woman grew quite quiet; she looked up at everyone, and seemed as if she had just wakened out of a restful sleep. She was quite well; all the fever went out of her, and she was so well, that she insisted upon getting out of bed, and helping her daughter get a meal ready for Jesus. We are told that she "arose and ministered

to them." How wonderful, was is not? One minute or two ago she was lying on her bed very ill, now she is walking about and serving a meal. How pleased and thankful Peter and his wife must have been! People soon hear about wonderful things, and everyone in the village heard about this, that day. In the evening, just before the sun set, they brought out all the sick people in the place, and crowded to the door of Peter's house, hoping that when Jesus would come out, He would make them well. Perhaps Peter was not pleased to see this crowd round his house. He may have wanted Jesus to have a quiet rest after a busy day, but our Lord never sent anyone away who needed help; He never thought of Himself, or of what might tire Him. He stepped outside, and He laid His loving hand on first one sick person, and then on the other. Some of them were lame, walking on crutches; some of them were nearly blind with very sore eyes; some were deaf, and could not hear; and some were mad, with wicked spirits inside them. All these were made quite, quite well! What a happy village that was that night! We can see the people going home with their poor little sick children, now skipping along by their sides, quite well and happy; and the old people walking as straight, and brisk, as anyone, having thrown away their crutches.

A hymn tells us about it:

"At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
O in what divers pains they met!
O with what joy they went away!"

The crowds still gathered round, and would not move away till it was quite dark.

Very early the next morning, Jesus slipped out of Peter's house quite alone. He wanted to have a quiet time to Himself, and He knew His days now would get busier and busier. So before it was light, He went right away among some lonely hills, and there He knelt down and prayed to His Father, God. I think this quiet time was the happiest time in His day. He loved talking to God, and getting strength for His poor body from Him. Above all, He got stronger and stronger in His soul when He prayed, as all of us must do, when we follow His example. And as He prayed, the sun began to show himself, and the day got lighter and brighter. It had been very grey, and still before, as if everything was hushed while Jesus prayed. Now the birds began to twitter, and leave their nests, and the sheep began to bleat, and presently, creeping up softly through the trees, came Peter, and Andrew, and the other disciples. They had come with a message for their master. Crowds of people were gathering together again, demanding to see our Lord.

His disciples told him:

"All men seek Thee."

Jesus rose from His knees. He knew His quiet time was over. He could only be alone, when other people were comfortably in their beds fast asleep. He did not show any impatience, though He had had no breakfast yet. He said quite happily and cheerfully:

"Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also. For therefore came I forth."

And every day after that, He went from village to village, all over Galilee, making sick people well; trying to comfort them if they were in sorrow or trouble, and talking to them about God and His love. He preached in the little village churches, and wherever He went, crowds of people followed Him.

One day, very soon after this, as Jesus was walking along a country road with His disciples, a poor man came along in the middle of the road. His clothes were in rags, his mouth was covered with a bit of cloth, and in the distance he could be heard calling out one word over and over again. It was "Unclean, unclean!"

When people saw him coming, they all ran away from him, and got out of his way. He was very ill of a dreadful illness which he could give to anyone who came near him, and that was why he had to call out "Unclean." It told the people who was coming. His illness was called leprosy, and he was called a leper. He had sores all over his body, and no doctor was able to make him better. He

was not allowed to go to church, with other people, or to live with them, or to talk with them, for fear he should pass his illness on to them. Now this poor man had heard of Jesus, and of how He was making all the sick people well, and he thought that if he could only get near Him, he would be cured too. But he did not know how to manage it, for the crowds round Jesus would never let him get near the Saviour. And then on this morning, he saw Jesus coming along the road, and the crowds following Him. The poor leper, when He got near, began to run to Him as fast as he could, and then fell down on his knees before Him. The people shrank back. The disciples were horrified. How dared this wretched leper come so near their dear Lord and Master!

The leper lifted up his sad, miserable eyes to the tender loving face of Jesus, and he said:

"If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Jesus looked down upon him with His wonderful smile; His eyes were full of pity and love. He did not shrink away from him. He put out His hand, and touched him. Touched the rags, and the sores, without any feeling of disgust. And He said these words:

"I will. Be thou clean."

There was a stillness and hush in the crowd behind Him. Could Jesus actually cure a leper, whom no one else in the world could cure?

Yes, almost directly the man got up; he pulled the cloth off his mouth, he turned up his sleeves to look at his arms, and his hands, and he found that all the sores and spots had gone. His skin was cool, and sweet, and fresh, like everyone else's, and he was a cured man!

Can you see his delight! How excited he must have been! And then Jesus told him to do two things; one was, to go straight to the priests and show himself to them, so that they could see he was really quite well, and would allow him to worship God in church with other people now. And the other thing was, that he was to go home, and not tell anyone what had happened to him.

He did go and show himself to the priests; but he couldn't help telling people who had cured him, and there was great astonishment and wonder in his city; the people came out in such crowds to see Jesus, that He had to get away from them. He went away into some of the lonely bits of desert country near, but even there, people came to Him. It seemed as if He could never be left alone now for five minutes. It was about this time that He went back to the village in which He had lived most of His life, which was called Nazareth, but a very sad thing happened there. One day He stood up in the little church and began to tell them who He was, and what the Bible said about Him, and how true it was. Some of the people, instead of listening, began to whisper among themselves:

"Why, He's only Jesus, the carpenter's son; we've seen Him grow up from a boy. He has no right to be talking like this."

And then, when Jesus went on to speak very sternly to them, telling them that there was danger of their missing God's blessing for them, by their want of trust and belief in Him, they were filled with furious anger. They got up from their seats; they seized hold of Him, and dragged Him out into the street, and along the road, determining to kill Him, and stop Him speaking to them about their sins. These wicked men and boys took Him to the edge of the high hill on which their village was built, and then they meant to push him down from the top, and dash him to pieces on the road below. They were all so excited, screaming at the top of their voices, that when they came to get hold of Jesus, they found He wasn't there. They were only seizing hold of each other! Jesus, whom nobody could hurt, unless He allowed it, had quietly slipped through the crowd, and away from them. He went on His way, as if nothing had happened. As they would not listen to Him, He left them, and went to another town, a long way off. But it was a sad thing for the people in His own village to be the first to try to kill the One who had come to be their Saviour. I should think it must have made His mother, Mary, very unhappy; we read of her as living at Capernaum after this, so she thought it best to move away. Nazareth was one of the vil-

lages where the sick people were not cured. They had driven away the One Person who could have made them quite well. It was not only foolish of them, but very, very wicked.

V

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

ALL kinds of people came to see Jesus, to talk to Him, and to be helped by Him. One night, when it was dark, and everyone was in their houses, and the shutters were up, and the lamps lighted inside, Jesus heard a gentle knock at the door of the house in which He was lodging. Everyone else was in bed, but Jesus knew who it was, and He opened the door at once. A tall man stood outside. He was not a poor man. His clothes showed he was rich, and they showed that he was a man who was very important. He was one of the most important people among the Jews, those who made the laws of the land, and who judged the people, and punished the wicked ones. He was a Pharisee, and he was a ruler of the people. His name was Nicodemus. Jesus welcomed him in, and made him sit down. He did not show any surprise that he had come to Him so late at night. He knew why he had done it. Nicodemus was afraid of people seeing him. He had heard about Jesus, and about the wonderful cures He had made. He had seen some of the people

who had been made well. He had mixed with the crowd, and heard Jesus speak, and tell them about God, who had sent Him to teach them about Him. And he wanted to talk to Jesus himself. He began at once asking Him questions. When you are older, you can read for yourself all that he said to Jesus, and all that Jesus said to Him. Jesus told him that if he believed in Him, he would never, never die, but live for ever with God in Heaven. He did not mean that his body would not die. When he went to Heaven, he would not want that part of him, so he would leave it behind him on the earth. Jesus told him a lot more. He listened most attentively, and went away as quietly as he had come. The other great men, the rulers, did not like Jesus, and would have been angry with him for visiting Him. I think that after that night, Nicodemus did believe in Jesus, and tried to do what He told him to do. He spoke up for Him once, when other people were abusing and talking against Him; and we hear of him once again coming forward to do something for Jesus, but we will hear about that, later on.

One very warm morning, Jesus and His disciples were taking a long journey. They had no carriages to take them, no horses or donkeys to ride. They had to walk, and their feet got very tired and sore. They had been in a place called Judea, and now they were going back to Galilee. The sun was blazing hot. They could not keep under the shady trees all the way; and they were not only tired, but

hungry and thirsty. It was getting near twelve o'clock, the hottest part of the day. Generally, people stayed in their cool houses, and ate their dinners at that time. Jesus and His disciples had no food with them, and they at last came outside a little town called Sychar. The people who lived in that town, were not good people at all. They lived just as they liked, and they were called Samaritans. They did not worship God properly, and God's people, the Jews, did not wish to know them, or have anything to do with them.

Just before they came to the town, there was a shady clump of trees, and among these trees, was a stone well. Water could be got out of it by anyone who wished. Jesus was very tired by the time He reached the well. His disciples begged Him to rest quietly there in the shade, while they went into the town to buy some meat for their dinner. He sat down by the side of it, on a stone seat made there. He was tired, and rather sad. He had just heard that His cousin John the Baptist had been seized by Herod the King, and put into prison. It seemed as if the Jews, whom Jesus had come down from Heaven to help and to save, did not want Him. They ill-treated His messenger John, and stopped Him from preaching, and His own neighbors and friends in Nazareth, had turned against Him.

As He was thinking of these things and resting His poor tired body, a woman came up to the well to get some water. She had come out of the town,

and she looked surprised when she saw a stranger at the well. Jesus looked up at her, and asked her gently if she could give Him some water to drink. She had her pitcher, and the rope with which she could let it down into the water, and draw it up again. Jesus had no cup or jug, and however thirsty He was, He could not get Himself any water: the well was deep, and the water far down in it. The woman looked at Him in astonishment. She knew from His dress and look that He was a Jew. Then she said that she wondered at Him asking such a favor from her, as He was a Jew. All Jews hated the Samaritans, and would not come near them, or touch them. Very gently He spoke to her of some living water He would give her, if she only asked for it.

She said: "Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From whence, then, hast Thou that living water?"

Jesus told her the water He gave people did not come from that well. The water in the well did not satisfy people for ever. They quickly grew thirsty again, but this water that He could give, satisfied people for always. They never got thirsty again, and it would be like a well inside them, always making them feel fresh and happy. The woman said: "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not; neither come hither to draw."

Then Jesus, seeing she did not understand that His water was for her soul, and not for her body,

began to talk to her about her life, and all the wrong things she had done.

The woman was astonished that He knew all about her, and said that He must be a prophet. Jesus went on talking to her. And then she said:

"I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ. When He is come, He will tell us all things."

She wanted to show Jesus that she was not an ignorant woman. She had heard the Bible read, and she knew that Messiah was coming into the world one day.

Then Jesus said very quietly:

"I that speak unto thee am He."

Just at that moment, His disciples came back to Him. They wondered to see Him talking so earnestly to this poor Samaritan woman, but they did not like to say anything. I daresay they showed the woman how they despised and disliked her. She went off very quickly when they came; but she left her water-pot behind her, and directly she had gone the disciples spread out the food they had bought before Jesus, and begged Him to eat. He told them He had better things to do than eating, that He would much rather try to get people to love and serve God, than anything else in the world. And very soon the woman came back, bringing a lot of her friends from the town with her. She had told them of the wonderful stranger, who had been talking to her, and who knew all that she had done,

though she had never seen Him before, and she said: "Is not this the Christ?"

They came to see Him, and so believed in Him, that they begged Him to come into their town, and talk to them.

Something in Jesus' loving, holy face, in the tones of His soft earnest voice, and in the wonderful words He spoke, made these poor Samaritans long to hear more. And though His disciples did not like it at all, Jesus went into the town, and stayed there two days, teaching the people about God. Many of them gave up being wicked, and turned to God and believed that Jesus was His Son, and the Saviour of the World.

After this Jesus went back to the little village, Cana, where He had turned the water into wine. He had not been there very long, before He was told by His disciples, that a very rich man, a nobleman, had come to see Him, and seemed in great trouble.

Jesus went to him at once, and the man, though he was a very wealthy man and in high position, almost knelt to Jesus. He seemed distracted with grief.

"I have a son," he said; "he is very, very ill, at the point of death. The doctor can't cure him. They say he must die. I heard of the wonderful cures You have made, and I have come straight off to You. I beseech You, come back with me and heal him."

Jesus looked at him, and His eyes were full of pity. He knew how the father loved his boy, and what agony it gave him to think he was going to lose him. But Jesus sighed as He said to the nobleman:

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

"Sir," cried the poor father, almost weeping, "come down, ere my child die."

Every minute seemed precious to him. Every minute was hastening his son's death. Unless Jesus came back with him instantly, it would be too late. He had brought his servants, his carriage and horses; he wanted our Lord to come at once.

Jesus looked at him, and then a wonderful smile came upon His face.

"Go thy way, thy son liveth."

Now, would the nobleman believe Jesus' word, and go home without Him?

Yes, indeed, he did. Looking up into Jesus' face, and seeing such love and pity in it, and hearing the glad certainty of His voice, he went straight away, got into his carriage, and drove home, repeating to himself again and again:

"He said my boy is better, going to live. I'll believe Him. He is a prophet of God. He has made people well by laying His hand on them. He has made my boy well, without touching or seeing him."

It was a long journey home, but the nobleman

was quite certain that his boy was well. At last, as he was coming near his home, some of his servants came to meet him. I expect his wife had sent them to tell him the good news.

"Thy son liveth," they said.

"When did he begin to get better?" he asked; "what time was it?"

"About the middle of the day yesterday—the seventh hour," they said; "the fever suddenly left him, and he is quite himself again."

Ah; the father knew then, that at the exact moment when Jesus said, "Go thy way, thy son liveth," his boy began to get better.

What a delightful return! He had gone away wondering if he would ever see his boy alive again. He comes back and finds he is no longer ill, but as bright, and strong, and happy as he was before his illness. No wonder, we are told that the nobleman and all his house believed in Jesus! "He must be the Christ, the Son of God, to be able to do such wonderful things," they said.

Jesus found sometimes, that He had too many people following Him about to be able to talk to them all, and make them hear Him. He had a lot He wanted to teach them, and He did not spend all His day in working miracles. So one day, very early in the morning, He went up to the top of a high hill, and called His disciples to come with Him. He told them the time had come for Him to choose a special number of them to be with Him

always, and help Him in His work, and very soon they would be sent by themselves into the villages, to heal the sick, and to preach and teach the people about God and His love. He chose twelve men, and these were their names: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, another James, Simon, Judas Iscariot, and another Judas. I expect Jesus prayed with them, and made them see what an honor it was for them to be chosen messengers of God.

He was having a quiet time with them; but very soon crowds of people were to be seen climbing the hill, and Jesus knew that they were coming to look for Him. So He went down from the very top of the hill, and sat down on a flat part of it where there was a lot of grass, and then He began to speak to them. His sermon to them has been called the "Sermon on the Mount." He told them how they ought to live if they really wished to be God's children; that it was as bad to be angry and hate each other, as it was to kill one another; that they must love everyone, even their enemies, and forgive them. Then He told them how they must pray, and that they must be true, and not do things for the sake of being praised, but because it was right. He told them they could pray to God about everything, and if they asked of Him, they would be answered. And that they must not be anxious about what clothes they wore, or what food they ate, but that they must think about God, and His Kingdom first,

and then they would get all that was good for them afterwards.

The people listened. They had never heard this kind of talk before. It was not a dry dull sermon with long words in it. Jesus told them stories, and talked to them about the flowers on the mountain; and some things He said were so strange that it made them smile; and others were so solemn, that they listened with a hush and silence. I think I must tell you one of the little stories He told them that day. He was wanting to show them the difference between a good man and a bad man, between one who listened to Jesus, and tried to do everything He told him to do, and to one who listened, and determined to be disobedient, and not care about anything that was right.

These two men determined to build houses for themselves and their families.

One of them took great pains in choosing where he should place his house. He wanted it to be very strong, so that the wind and storms could not blow it down. And he knew if he built it deep into a rock, nothing could move it, so he found a flat piece of ground which was all solid rock underneath, and he took his pickaxe, and began to dig down into it. It was very hard, slow work, for the rock was hard, and had to be split up in little bits one by one, till he could get a hole big enough to lay the foundation of his house.

The other man saw what he was doing, and laughed at him.

"Why, you'll be all your life building your house! I'm going to get about mine very quickly."

He did not look about very long; there was a lot of sandy earth close by; he began digging in it at once. It was easy work to dig in the sand, and he soon had his house begun. Every day he built faster and faster, and his house was finished long before the other man, who was still fastening his house into the strong rock. At last both houses were finished, and the men took their families to live in them.

One day a terrible storm came on. Rain and wind lashed against those houses, the rivers overflowed their banks, and came rushing along, carrying everything before them. Both men shut themselves inside their houses, and hoped to be sheltered from the storm. Night and darkness came on, but with the noise of the wind and rain, were screams of terror and distress. When the morning dawned, and the storm was over, the house on the rock stood as firm and sure as ever, but the house on the sand—where was it? Gone! Swept away by the flood and wind. How could it stand against the storm? It was only built on sand; and the foolish man and his family were all destroyed in it.

Jesus told this story to show people that the easy way to live it not always the right way; and that we must do what He tells us, and lean upon Him,

and build the house of our Soul upon Him and His Words, and then when trouble comes upon us, we shall never be upset or overthrown.

When Jesus had finished His sermon, He came down from the mountains, but the people still followed Him, and brought Him their sick to heal. Every day, and all day long, Jesus was preaching, and teaching, and making people well.

Would you not like to have been near Him, and have seen Him do all these wonderful things?

"He did kind things so kindly!
It seemed His Heart's delight,
To make poor people happy
From morning until night.
He always seemed at leisure
For everyone who came:
However tired or busy,
They found Him just the same."

VI

WONDERFUL MIRACLES

WHEN we hear sermons, we are generally in church. The minister stands in the pulpit, and preaches to us, but in hot countries, missionaries very often preach to people out of doors. Jesus preached very often in the open air; but the people crowded and pressed so close up to Him, and were so talkative and excitable, that He found it very difficult to get them all to hear Him.

One morning He was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. Now this lake was a very big piece of water. If you stood by it, you would think it was the sea itself. The water was fresh like a river, not salt like the sea, but there was a lot of fish in it, and people round it used to live by fishing. Two or three of our Lord's disciples were fishermen, as you know, and they had not entirely given up their fishing.

It was a very fine morning. A little breeze made a ripple on the water. Two boats were drawn up on the shore close to the lake. The men who owned them were busy washing their nets. They were looking tired and disappointed. Peter was one of

these men. He brightened up a little, when he saw Jesus coming towards him. He always felt happy when Jesus was close to him.

And then our Lord stepped into Peter's empty boat, and beckoned to him.

"Row me out a little from the land," He said to him.

Peter jumped into the boat at once, and took the oars. He would have loved to row his Master across the lake, away from the noisy crowd who came after Him, but Jesus only let Himself be rowed for a few yards out; then He began to speak to the crowds along the water's edge. They were quiet now, and Jesus could speak much better in this way, than when they were pushing each other to and fro, to see who could get nearest Him. He taught them for some time from the boat. It was a strange pulpit, was it not? And then when He had finished, He looked into Peter's tired face and said:

"Now you can row me out farther. Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught."

Peter looked up rather astonished. This was not the time of day to catch fish. The sun was blazing on the water. He caught fish at night-time, when it was dark, and the fish could not see the nets being drawn through the water.

"Master," he said; "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing. Nevertheless at Thy word, I will let down the net."

He knew that when His Master told him to do anything, he must do it, however impossible it seemed. He had brought his net into the boat with him, and his brother Andrew had just sprung into the boat, seeing he was preparing to go out again. The brothers dropped the big net over the boat at once, and trailed it after them in the water. Almost immediately, shoals of fish came into it, and the net got so heavy with the weight of them, that the net broke. The brothers called to the other fishermen, their partners, to come to their help. The glittering fish now filled both the boats; such thousands of them were drawn in, that the boats almost began to sink. Peter was so astonished and overcome, that he fell down at Jesus' feet. He was sure that He was God indeed. No man could have made these quantities of fish come into their nets, in broad daylight.

"Depart from me," he said; "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

He felt he was not fit to be near the Holy Son of God.

Jesus smiled upon Peter.

"Fear not. From henceforth thou shalt catch men."

He meant that Peter would bring hundreds of people into the Kingdom of God, and so Peter did, long afterwards. Hundreds of people turned to God, after listening to one of his sermons.

The poor fishermen were rejoiced with their fish.

They brought their boats to land, and their families were able to sell the fish, and take some for food for themselves. As for the disciples, they left their fish again, and followed Jesus.

More than ever, they wanted to stay close to His side. And they hardly ever left Him now. Peter, and James, and John, especially, were always with Him.

Every day seemed to bring some fresh wonder; some fresh cure or miracle. But Jesus never did these wonderful things to astonish or amuse people. It was only to help those who really needed help, or to show His power as the Son of God.

We are going to hear now about some of the poor people who were made well.

One day Jesus was in Capernaum, the little town in which He chiefly lived, since His own village had driven Him away. It is supposed that Simon had a house there, and that Jesus was staying with him. The people in the town heard that Jesus had come there to stay for a little, and they all crowded into the inner court of the house, where Jesus was talking to a few people. Everybody from the town seemed to be there on this day. Some very important men, called the Pharisees, who had to do with making the laws, and some scribes, men who studied the Bible, and wrote out parts to send round the country for people to read, came inside the house with the rest of the people. These Pharisees and scribes were very proud men, and thought

themselves so good and holy that they despised everyone else. They were quite sure that everything they said and did was right, and they did not like Jesus, because several times He told them that they were wrong in things they did, and were no better than some of the common people whom they despised.

Presently four men came along the street, carrying very carefully a sick man on his bed or mattress. Poor man! He had been ill a long time, and could not come to Jesus himself, for he had the palsy, an illness which took all strength out of his legs and arms, and made his body shake all over. His eyes and lips could move a little, that was all. The rest of his body was quite helpless. He had to be lifted up, and carried, and even fed by other people. He could not move any part of his body. But he had heard of Jesus, and his friends were bringing him along, believing that he would be cured, if Jesus were to see him and lay His hands on him. But when they came to the house, there was such a crowd, that they could not pass the people. They tried hard, but everyone was so selfish, that they would not make room for them. The poor sick man looked very disappointed and unhappy; but his friends were determined to get to Jesus. They looked about them, and then they carried him up the stone steps which led to the flat roof of the house. When they got on the top, they found a place where they could break up some thin board-

ing, and make a hole through the ceiling of the room, in which Jesus was. Then they tied some ropes to the four corners of the sick man's mattress, and gently lowered him, down, down, to the very spot where Jesus was sitting. I wonder if he was frightened of being let down in that way? Jesus was pleased at the faith of the sick man and his friends. If they had not felt sure that He could cure him, they would not have taken such trouble to reach Him. Nothing stopped them; no crowd could keep them away!

And then Jesus looked at the sick man. His tender loving eyes seemed to look through his poor helpless body into his sinful soul. This man, like a good many, had not lived a very good life; and since he had been ill, he often thought about his sins, and wondered if his sickness were sent him as a punishment from God. He longed for God to forgive him. But he could not speak about this to the priests; he could not make himself understood. And now what were the first words that Jesus spoke?

He said: "Son, be of good cheer. Thy sins be forgiven thee."

Such a glad happy light came into the sick man's eyes, when he heard this.

Were his sins really forgiven? He had heard that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. If He told him his sins were forgiven, then they really were. A great burden seemed taken from his heart.

But the Pharisees and scribes were shocked and angry.

"Who can forgive sins but God only?" they said to each other. "This man Jesus is speaking very wickedly."

But they did not speak out loud; only Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking and whispering.

He turned to them.

"Now," He said; "which is easier for me to say to this poor man—'Thy sins be forgiven thee'? or to say, 'Arise and take up thy bed and walk'?"

Both these things could only be said by God. Now Jesus went on: "I want to show you that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. If I can cure this man of his sickness, I can forgive him his sins. I can make him well both in body and soul."

Then He turned to the sick man.

"I say unto thee arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way into thy house."

The crowds pressed nearer. They were almost breathless with excitement, wondering if this helpless man could possibly do what he was told.

Then his head moved; he sat up; he stood up; and stooping to his bed, he seized hold of it, hoisted it up to his shoulders, and strode through the crowd, as well and strong, as the strongest of them there. He was the very happiest man in the city that day. He had his sins forgiven, and his body cured. How

grateful and thankful he must have felt to the Lord Jesus, who had done so much for him! The crowd of people were so astonished, and delighted, that they began to sing thanks to God, for sending such a wonderful Christ among them. The scribes and Pharisees crept away in silence. What could they say now? It had been shown them, that God had given Jesus power to forgive sins and to heal sick people.

It was not very long after this, that Jesus healed another man who could not walk.

It was in Jerusalem, and Jesus and His disciples had gone there to attend a feast. Now in Jerusalem, there was a great pond built all round with stone porches and steps. The water in this pond was supposed to be very good for people to bathe in, and a lot of sick people went there. They got down into the water at a certain time, when the water moved about. It is supposed that springs broke underneath it, at certain times of the year, and made the water bubble up. But there was an old story that an angel came down from Heaven, and stirred up the water, and directly the water was seen moving, the first person who stepped in, was made well of whatever illness he had. The people believed this, and there was always a crowd round the pond. Jesus came down one Sunday morning to the pond, and saw one poor man lying on his bed close to the steps that led down to the water. He had been ill for thirty-eight years. He

was very feeble, and was a lonely, friendless man. No kind relations looked after him. He lived by himself, and would drag himself slowly, and with great pain, down to this pond every day, and lie close beside it all day, hoping that when the water moved, he could be the first to get down into it, and be healed. Poor man! When the right time came he had no one to help him; somebody pushed by him, sometimes knocked him down in their haste to get into the water first, and he was never in time to be healed. Jesus knew all about him, and now He stooped down over him, and said very kindly:

"Wilt thou be made whole?"

"Sir," the man said; "I have no man when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool, but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Then Jesus said:

"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

Like the paralyzed man, this poor sick man did what he was told at once. He did not lie there, and say he could not. He just tried to get up, and he found he could do it.

He was walking away delightedly, shouldering his bed, when some Jews met him.

"It is not right for you to be carrying your bed on Sunday."

The Jews were very particular about keeping their Sunday a day of rest. They were never allowed to carry anything in their hands, not even a pencil, or a knife, in their pockets.

"Oh," said the man; "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, 'Take up thy bed and walk.'"

"Who is that?" they asked.

The poor man did not know who it was; he looked about, but Jesus had disappeared. There were such crowds of people in Jerusalem that day, that it was difficult to find Him.

But a short time afterwards, this poor man was in the Temple, perhaps thanking God for sending this wonderful stranger to heal him, when he suddenly caught sight of Jesus. He asked people who He was; and when he knew, he went and told the Jews who had questioned him, that it was Jesus who had made him well.

The Jews, instead of being glad, were very angry with Jesus, because He had cured a man on Sunday; and they began to persecute Him, and try to kill Him. They hated Him more than ever.

How sad that the Jews, to whom God had sent Jesus, should hate Him, and try to kill Him! Some of them believed in Him, but not very many.

One day, when Jesus was in Capernaum, some of the elders of the Jews, who did believe in Him, came to Him, and told Him that a Roman officer, who had been very good to the Jews, was in great trouble. He had a faithful servant of whom he was very fond, and his servant was dangerously ill. He had been stricken down by the palsy, and he was now dying. The officer sent a message to Jesus

"'GET UP AND CARRY YOUR MAT AND WALK'"

begging Him to come and heal him. The Jews who brought the message, told Jesus that the officer was a very good man and loved the Jews, and loved their God, and had built them a church at his own expense, so that they might worship God in it. Jesus went off with them at once. Nobody ever sent to Him in vain. As they were going along the road to the officer's house, some people met and stopped Him. They were some more friends of the officer's, and they brought another message.

The officer's message was this:

"Lord, do not trouble to come any farther! I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Say but the word, and my servant shall be healed."

The message went on to say that the officer was quite accustomed to command, and whatever he said was to be done, was done instantly by soldiers under him. If he said "Go," they went; "Come," they came. "Do this," and they did it. So Jesus had power on earth to command everybody and everything. He had only to say the servant was to be well, and he would be well.

This was a wonderful message from a Roman heathen. It showed that he had real faith in Jesus, as Son of God.

When Jesus had this message given Him, He showed the people that He was astonished. As usual, crowds of people followed Him, a great many

out of curiosity, because they liked seeing miracles being done.

A miracle is an impossible thing becoming possible.

Jesus did not walk any farther. He turned back, but He said to the crowd: "I have not found so great faith—no, not in Israel." And He told the officer's friends to go back to the officer and say: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

We are told that when they got there, they found the servant quite well, and he had got well just at the time when Jesus spoke those last words.

You see, this officer believed in Jesus, without seeing Him. That is what we do, now that He is in Heaven, and we are on earth. And now we are going to hear about something more wonderful still, that happened the very next day to this.

Very early the next morning, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to visit a little village called Nain, which was about twenty-five miles away. I expect they got into a boat first of all, and sailed along the edge of the lake, or Sea of Galilee, and then got out and walked. But Jesus could never go to any place quietly now; there were always crowds of people following Him. And the crowds talked of making Him their King. They thought He would save them from the Romans, who were their enemies, and who ruled over them now. Jesus could not make them understand, that He had not come to be an earthly King. They fol-

lowed Him now, some in boats, some on land; and by the time Jesus and His disciples had got near the gate of the little city, He had a long crowd of people behind Him.

There was another crowd coming out of the gate of Nain.

All the towns then were surrounded by walls, and had gates, which were locked at night, to keep robbers and enemies out.

This was a quiet sad crowd. It was a funeral. People always had to be buried outside the walls of their town, and a young man had died, and his body was being carried to the grave. It was specially sad, because he was the only son of a widow woman. She had lost her husband, but her boy was her comfort and joy. She had watched him grow up as strong and merry as other boys about him. She always looked forward to being helped by him in her old age, and then suddenly one day he was taken ill. The poor mother was distracted; she had the doctor, but he could not make him well, and he had got worse and worse, and at last died. Her strong merry boy had been taken from her, and she was left to follow him to the grave, a lonely, despairing, broken-hearted woman. She was sobbing bitterly as she followed the coffin now, and other people were crying too. They felt for her so much. She could not be comforted. She only wished that she had died instead of her son.

When our Lord saw her, He was full of pity and

love for her. He stepped up very quietly to her, and said in His tender voice: "Weep not!"

She started at being spoken to by a stranger, then stood still. Who was this telling her not to weep? It must be somebody important, coming into the town with a procession of people following Him. Was it possibly the wonderful prophet, Jesus of Nazareth? She had heard of Him, and how He made sick people well. If she had only been able to get hold of Him when her dear boy had been taken ill, He might have cured him, but there seemed no time to send for anyone, and he was dead now. It was too late! Too late!

Was it? Jesus stood still; and now the coffin was being carried past Him. He put out His hand and touched it. None of the Jews would ever touch a coffin, but Jesus had no horror of it. The men who carried the coffin stood still. There was no lid upon it. The young man lay in it still and lifeless. When the coffin was stopped, all the people stood still and held their breath. What was going to happen? Jesus looked down upon the dead body, and said very clearly and commandingly:

"Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

Instantly the dead boy sat up, as if he had just waked out of sleep. The color was back in his cheeks; his eyes were bright, and he began to talk; most likely to call for his mother, or ask why he was here? Jesus led him to his mother, who clasped him in her arms. Her grief was turned to

joy. She could hardly believe it was true. The people seemed astounded, and a little frightened. Then they began to thank God for having sent them such a great and wonderful prophet, who with a word could raise the dead to life.

What a happy crowd went back to Nain now! The news spread all over the country. Everyone was talking of this fresh wonder, and sign, which showed that Jesus was the Son of God.

"He gave away no money,
For He had none to give;
But He had power of healing
And made dead people live."

VII

THE LITTLE MAID, AND THE FEAST OF FIVE THOUSAND

ONE afternoon, when it was beginning to get dusk, Jesus was rather tired. He had had a busy day. He had been healing sick people, and preaching for a long time, so He said to His disciples:

"Let us go over to the other side of the lake."

He hoped to get a little rest and quiet there, for He could not get away from the crowds of people. One of the scribes heard Him speak, and came up to Him, saying he wanted to come with Him, and would follow Him wherever He went. Jesus shook His head rather sadly: He knew the scribe did not mean what he said; he was too fond of his own comfort, to live as Jesus did.

"The foxes have holes," Jesus said to him; "and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

And then He stepped quietly into the boat; His disciples pushed it into the water, then clambered in, and away they went over the grey sea. Some of the people tried to follow them in boats, but there were signs of a storm coming up, and it was getting dark, so they turned back. Jesus Christ was so

tired, and worn out, that He just lay down in the bottom of the boat, pillowing His Head on a boat-cushion, and went fast asleep. His disciples looked up into the sky, and saw black clouds flying towards them. A sudden violent storm of wind swooped down upon them. The boat was tossed to and fro; the waves began to lash themselves into a fury and dashed themselves against the boat, covering everyone with their foam and spray. Yet still Jesus slept on, and His disciples, knowing how tired He was, did not wake Him, but tried their best to row their boat through the violent waves.

The stars soon disappeared behind the clouds; it was dark all around them. Bang! A wave came right over them, and swamped the boat with water! Another and another! Now the boat was full of water, and they felt it beginning to sink! Terrified, the disciples cry out, and wake Jesus.

"Lord, carest Thou not that we perish?" Their tone was almost angry and fault-finding. They could not understand Him sleeping quietly on. Surely He must feel and hear the storm!

Jesus stood up. He did not seem disturbed at seeing the boat full of water, and the waves right above them. He looked round on the boiling sea, and He said very quietly, but with great firmness:

"Peace, be still."

Instantly—in a second—the wind stopped blowing, the waves sank out of sight. There was a great calm; then He looked at His disciples.

"Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye hath no faith?"

They might have known that God would not let their Master drown, but they let their fright get the better of their sense. Now they were awestruck. They knew illness could be cured by Jesus, but they did not know that the winds and sea would obey Him.

"A little ship was on the sea,
It was a pretty sight,
It sail'd along so pleasantly,
And all was calm and bright.

When, lo! a storm began to rise,
The wind grew loud and strong;
It blew the clouds across the skies,
It blew the waves along.

And all but One were sore afraid,
Of sinking in the deep;
His Head was on a pillow laid,
And He was fast asleep.

'Master, we perish! Master, save!'
They cried; their Master heard,
He rose, rebuked the wind and wave,
And still'd them with a word.

He to the storm says 'Peace, be still';
The raging billows cease;
The mighty winds obey His will,
And all are hushed to peace——"

They felt ashamed of their fright, and so glad that the storm was over.

It was very early morning, when they reached the shore. But it had been easy sailing there, over the calm, peaceful sea.

Directly they landed, they were met by a poor afflicted madman, who had one of those wicked spirits inside him. This man was a terror to everyone. He could not be kept in his house. He tore his clothes to pieces, and wandered about in lonely places by himself. Everyone was afraid of him. They had tried to tie his hands with chains, to prevent him doing harm, but he broke his chains and escaped. The people were glad when he ran away, and lived among some graves, which were made near some rocks. But he was so fierce that no one would pass by him, they dare not. Now this fierce wild man rushed to the shore to meet Jesus, when He got out of the boat. He gave a loud shout, and fell down at His feet, calling out:

"What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God Most High? I beseech Thee torment me not!"

Jesus had told the evil spirit to come out of him. Then Jesus asked the man his name. The wicked spirit made him say:

"Legion, for we are many."

He meant that he had more than one wicked spirit in him. These spirits knew they would have to leave this man, for Jesus told them to come out of him, and they asked if they might go and worry some pigs that were feeding near. Jesus gave them permission, and the pigs were so terrified that they rushed down a steep place into the sea, and were drowned. The men who were looking after them,

were so frightened and angry at the loss of their pigs, that they hurried into the town, and told everybody what had happened. Crowds of people came out to see Jesus; and there they saw the wild man, sitting at Jesus' feet in his right mind, quite happy and calm. Would not you have thought the people would have praised God, and begged Jesus to come into their city?

They did not; they actually begged Him to go away. They were frightened at what had happened. Jesus never stayed where He was not wanted, so He told his disciples that they must go back in their little ship to the other side again. Then the poor man who had been made quite well, begged to go too. He loved Jesus for having saved him from those dreadful spirits. But Jesus said, He would rather that he went home, and told what great things God had done for him. The man obeyed Jesus. He went through every part of his town, telling all the people what had happened to him, and who had cured him. We will hope that they were sorry now that they had sent Jesus away from them. They might have had all their sick people cured by Him, if He had come into their town. When Jesus got over to the other side, he found a lot of people waiting for him on the shore. There was no rest for Him. Almost as soon as He landed, a very rich man, a ruler in the Synagogue or Church, came hurrying towards Him. His face was troubled and very unhappy. He dropped on

his knees, when he came to Jesus, and began to implore Him to help him. He was generally a very proud man, but he did not care for anything now. He did not mind his rich clothes getting soiled and dusty, as he knelt on the sand before Jesus.

"My little daughter lieth at the point of death. I pray Thee come and lay Thy hands upon her, that she may be healed and she shall live."

His darling little girl was only twelve years old; she was the delight of her father's heart. Now her merry little voice was hushed, her busy scampering feet already getting cold and still. She had been taken suddenly ill, and her poor father rushed off at once to find Jesus. He had seen others cured. If only Jesus would come in time, He could save her. There seemed no hope; everybody said that she was dying, but the father would not lose hope. Jesus went with him at once; and all the people crowded after Him, for they hoped to see another wonderful miracle. Now someone else had been waiting to see Jesus, and this was a poor sick woman. She had been ill for twelve long years, and had spent all her money on going to one doctor after another, but was no better, only worse. She mixed with the crowd, and very quietly began to push herself through it, up to Jesus. She said to herself:

"If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole."

At last she crept up close to Jesus, and trembling,

took hold of the hem of His long robe. Instantly she did it, she felt quite well, and knew she was healed.

But Jesus turned round then.

"Who touched my clothes?"

His disciples said that everyone was touching Him; the crowd were thronging Him.

Jesus still looked round. He knew all about the woman, but He wanted to show her that He knew she had touched Him, for a purpose. The woman was frightened; perhaps she ought not to have done it, and yet how could she be sorry? She fell down at His feet and told Him the truth. How lovingly Jesus spoke to her!

"Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

Jesus told her it was her faith, not her touch, that had made Him heal her. And as the woman left Him gladly and thankfully, some other persons pushed themselves through the crowd. They spoke to the ruler, for they had just come from his house. It was a sad message they gave him.

"Thy daughter is dead. Why troublest thou the Master any further?"

The ruler was quite overcome; perhaps he thought if Jesus had come along quicker, and not stopped to speak to the poor woman who was healed, that He might have arrived in time. Now it was too late. Jesus saw his grief, and He looked at him such a comforting, encouraging smile!

"Be not afraid, only believe," He said.

The poor father did not know what to think, but he hurried home the faster, and Jesus followed him. When they got near the courtyard of the big house where he lived, Jesus turned round to the crowd, and sent them all away. He only took three of His disciples into the house with Him, and they were Peter, James, and John. There was a great noise of weeping, and wailing in the house. The hired mourners who always went to the house to moan when anyone was dead, and play dismal kinds of tunes, were already there. Jesus said to them as He passed them:

"Why make ye this ado, and weep? The little maid is not dead, but sleepeth."

They very rudely and scornfully laughed at Him.

"What is the good of Him coming now and telling us that?" they said to each other.

But Jesus very quietly and sternly sent them away, and then He told the father and mother of the little girl, and His three disciples to come into the room with Him, where she was lying dead. He bent over the little girl; she lay there cold, and still, and lifeless; her eyes were closed. There was no breath coming out of her mouth. He took her little cold hand in His, and He said very gently:

"Damsel, or 'little maid,' I say unto thee, arise."

The little girl opened her eyes; she breathed; she lived! The next minute she sprang off the bed.

She was perfectly well. Jesus turned to her parents, and told them to give her something to eat; He knew she wanted it. Her happy, grateful parents did not know how to thank Jesus. They could hardly believe it was true, and yet when they saw their little daughter walking about, they knew that she was indeed given back to them from the dead.

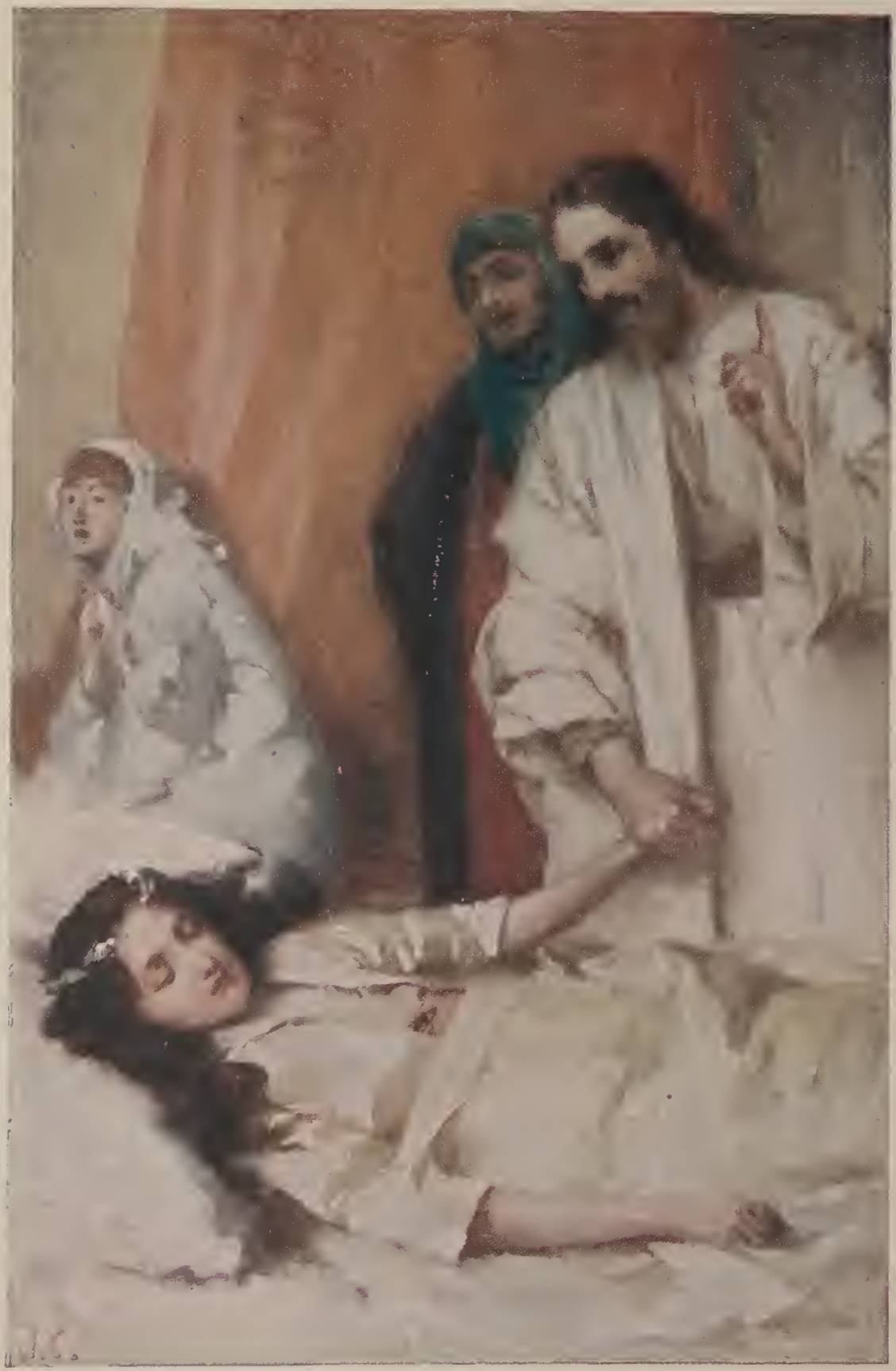
Jesus slipped quietly out of the house, and went on His way. And as He went along, He made two blind men see, and one dumb man speak. No wonder the crowds followed Him! Nobody had ever done so many miracles as He did. Every day He did some fresh marvel in their eyes.

It was just after this, that our Lord called His disciples to Him, and gave them the power to heal sick people as well as Himself; and then He sent the twelve of them into different villages round to preach, saying:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

He told them they must "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."

It was the first bit of real work for God, that the disciples had done. I expect they felt rather afraid at first, of going off alone without their Master, but there was one thing that they found quite easy, and that was to tell the people about Jesus and what He was like. It is easy to talk about anyone you love, and they loved Him very much indeed. And then they knew that they could



"HE TOOK THE LITTLE HAND WHICH WAS GROWING COLD"

always come back to Jesus, and tell Him if they were in difficulty, or were making mistakes. He did not send them away from Him altogether; they still went about with Him, and were always coming and going.

One day they gathered themselves together, we are told, and came to Jesus, to tell Him what they had done and taught. And among other things, they brought Him very sad news of His cousin, John the Baptist. He was dead. For a long time he had been shut up in prison by King Herod. Jesus knew about this; for once John had sent messengers to Him, asking Him if He was indeed the Christ, and Jesus had sent back a message to tell him about the miracles God was helping Him to do. Perhaps John's faith was shaken: he could not understand why Jesus, if He could do everything, would not break down his prison doors, and help him to escape. But it was not God's will that John should leave his prison. He had done his work, and now God wanted him in Heaven. A very wicked woman, who hated John, persuaded King Herod to cut off his head. She got her young daughter to dance before the King, and the King was so pleased, that he told her he would give her anything she asked for. The girl asked her mother what she should say, and she told her to ask for the head of John the Baptist. What a dreadful thing to ask for! The King did not like to break his word, and so he sent a man to cut off John's

head, and it was brought to the girl. The disciples had heard about all this, and they came and told Jesus. Herod was hearing now about Jesus and His miracles and he was frightened. He had killed one of God's prophets; now here was another. Was it possible that it was John risen from the dead? He did not know what to think; all this the disciples told Jesus.

Jesus was very sad when He thought about John. It reminded Him of the day when the wicked people would put Him to death. But we will not talk about that now.

"Come," said Jesus, "we will go apart into a desert place, and rest for a while."

He wanted rest badly; He and His disciples had had no time that day to have their meals. They were hungry, and tired, and rather sad. So one of the disciples brought his little boat out; they got into it, and sailed over the sea to a lonely desert place, where there were no people or houses.

The people saw them go; they rushed along the edge of the lake, and actually made such haste, that when Jesus and His disciples landed, they found the people in crowds waiting for them; they had got there first! It was rather disappointing, was it not? There was no quiet, no rest for them now. When Jesus saw the people—women with their little children—men and boys—some sick people among them, His heart was full of pity and love for them. He did not think of Himself; He only thought of

them, and of how He could best help them. So He led them all to a place where there was a lot of smooth grass, and here, standing on a little slope, He began to speak to them about the Kingdom of God. Our Lord spoke in such a simple, interesting way, that people were never tired of listening to Him. Even the little children loved to gather round Him, for He told them many stories, and talked about the birds, and flowers, and grapes, and corn, and everything that they could see around them. He healed some of their sick too, upon this afternoon, and instead of resting with His disciples, Jesus talked and worked, and talked again, and still the crowds of people would not go away. They forgot it was tea-time; they forgot they were in a lonely desert place; and that there was no shops where they might get food. The afternoon passed, and evening came on, and then at last when it was dusk, the disciples came to Jesus.

"Send them away," they said; "so that they can go into the villages and get food. They have nothing to eat."

I expect they were a little impatient with these crowds. They wanted to have their dear Master to themselves.

Jesus looked round at all the people. He saw little children beginning to cry from tiredness and hunger. He saw women sitting on the ground, exhausted by the heat of the day, and from being so long without food, and then Jesus said:

"They need not depart. Give ye them to eat."

The disciples looked at Him, astonished. They had nothing to give them. Then Andrew said:

"There's a boy here, who has five loaves and two fishes, just enough for ourselves, but what are these among so many? And how can we go and buy meat for these thousands of people?"

Jesus said:

"Make them all sit down on the grass, in little companies of a hundred, and of fifties."

Now there were five thousand people altogether. The disciples asked no more questions. They always did what Jesus told them. They divided up the people in rows and circles on the grass, so that they could get about among them. I think everyone must have wondered what was going to happen! And then Jesus called the little boy to Him, and took the loaves and fishes out of his basket, and then He looked up to Heaven and said grace. He thanked God for this good food, and then He broke the bread into pieces, and gave each of the disciples a piece of bread, and a piece of fish, and told them to hand it round to the crowds. Without a word, they all started off, and began going from row to row, and giving people the food that was in their hands. In the most wonderful way, the bread and fish kept coming, and coming round, among the people, and still there was more. The little children ate till they could eat no more, and the men and women ate till they too were satisfied. They

all felt that they had never had such a good meal before. Was not that a wonderful supper which the Lord Jesus gave them? He made five tiny loaves, and two fish, more than enough for five thousand people! And afterwards He told His disciples to collect the crumbs, and waste bits on the ground, and they filled twelve baskets with broken bits of the feast!

Of course, the people were amazed, and also delighted. Then Jesus, knowing how weary His disciples were, said to them:

"Go back in the ship, and leave Me here; I will send the people away."

They did not want to leave Him at first, but He made them do it. The people were ready, and fit for their long walk home now. The children wanted to go to bed. It was nearly dark when Jesus told them they must go home; they obeyed Him quietly.

Now at last, at the end of this tiring day, Jesus was alone; He could speak to God without fear of interruption. He went up to the top of one of the high hills near, and there, He knelt down in prayer to His Heavenly Father. He could pour out His heart, and get comfort and strength to go on living. And when night came on, He was still there alone.

While Jesus was on the top of the mountain, His disciples were sailing their boat across the sea. Alas! They were soon in great trouble. A mighty wind swept down upon them; the waves rose; the sea tossed the boat up and down; they got out their

oars, but they could make no way; they were beaten back instantly.

"If only our Master were with us!" they cried; "He could calm this storm, as He did once before, when He was with us!"

It was very dark; the clouds were so heavy that they hid the moon. Suddenly one of them gave a frightened cry!

"Look! look! is it a ghost, a spirit?"

There was coming towards them on the sea, a figure! there was light about it; they could see the garments fluttering in the wind. It was too dark to see the face, but it looked as if it were a man like themselves. It could not be a man, for he was not in a boat; he was stepping over the waves as if they were the dry ground, and no man could do that! He came nearer and nearer; they all screamed then, they were so frightened!

And then across the water, came the voice of their Master:

"Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

Oh, how happy they felt when they heard that dear voice! And yet some of them seemed still frightened.

"It may be a wicked spirit pretending to be Him," they said.

Then Peter sprang to the edge of the boat, and called out boldly:

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water."

"Come," said our Lord, for it was indeed He. It was quite easy for Him to walk on the top of the sea; would it be easy for Peter? As he put one foot out of the boat, I can fancy he felt rather frightened. None of the others would have dared to do such a thing, but Peter was always venturesome. Jesus had called him. He would go. Splash into the water he went! but he did not sink, and his longing to get to his Master took him on over the waves quite easily. They bore him up, until a fresh blast and gust of wind almost knocked him down. He gasped; he looked at the great waves rolling in on him, and he forgot His Master's power; he only thought of the power of the storm! Sudden fear seized him; his feet slipped down, down; he was sinking!

"Lord, save me!" he cried out in terror.

And then out came a strong tender Hand. He was caught, and held by Jesus.

"Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" said His Master.

Peter was ashamed of himself. He felt safe now; he walked with his hand in His Lord's, back to the boat; and directly Jesus stepped into it, the wind went away, the sea became calm; all was quiet and still. The other disciples fell at His feet. They were ashamed, too, of their doubts and fears.

"Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God," they said.

They knew that no mere man could walk over a stormy sea, and make one of them do the same.

VIII

THE TRANSFIGURATION

ONE day some men who collected money for taxes, came to Peter, and said:

"Does not your Master pay the tax that He ought, to the Roman King?"

"Yes, He does," said Peter.

Then he went into the house where Jesus was, and told Him that the men wanted money from Him.

Jesus said that if He was a king's son, He need not give money, but He added:

"Never mind, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou has opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money. That take, and give unto them for Me and thee."

Peter went away, and did what he was told. He caught a fish, and found some money in its mouth, and he gave it to the men. Very often Jesus Christ was so poor, that He had no money at all. If He could get money out of a fish like this, He could have got money from anywhere. He could have had a fine house and lots of beautiful things. But Jesus did not wish to be rich;

He only had just enough money to get food, and clothes, and lodgings. He wanted to show poor people that they could be as happy as He was, without having much money.

He often told the people to think about Heaven first, and about money last.

Another day, He took Peter, and James, and John, up to the top of a high mountain, away from all the crowds of people that followed Him about. It was in the evening. Presently Jesus left His disciples, and went a little way off from them to pray.

The disciples rested, waiting for Him. They knew how much He loved talking to God His Father.

It was very quiet and still where they were, but suddenly something happened to Jesus.

Peter and the others saw a bright light appear; it seemed to fall on their Master. His dress looked a shining white, and as if it were made of sunshine. His face was shining like the sun.

They were rather frightened; they rubbed their eyes, and looked, for at first they thought they might have been dreaming. They could not see Jesus very plainly, because of the blazing sunshine all over Him. Then they saw two figures appear, one on each side of Him. One was Moses, and one Elias. They were two of God's holy prophets, who had lived many, many years before.

Moses had died on the top of a high mountain.

He was buried by God, for he was alone with Him when he died. Elias was taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire. Both these men were very faithful servants of God, and God loved and honored them above all others, by letting them now come to earth, for a few minutes and have a little talk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Peter saw them talking, he said in a frightened voice:

"Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, we will make three tents; one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Perhaps he thought that Moses and Elias had come down to stay; and he wondered if they would interfere with our Lord's teaching. To have two famous prophets going about beside his Master, might be rather awkward, unless they each had a place of their own, and kept to it.

He really was so frightened, that he hardly knew what he was saying. He just spoke out his thoughts. And then a very bright cloud came down on the top of the mountain, and hid the three shining figures.

Suddenly a great Voice came out of the cloud, which said:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."

Whose Voice was that?

God's.

It had been heard once before when Jesus was being baptized.

The disciples knew Who it was who spoke, and they immediately fell upon their faces.

They felt that this was holy ground, and that the Holy God was very near them.

God had spoken to them; He had told them that they must hear His dear Son, and I expect they often remembered these words, when they were listening to their Master's teaching afterwards.

After the Voice, there was silence.

And then in a moment or two, they felt someone touch them. It was Jesus.

"Arise," He said; "and be not afraid."

They did as they were told, and found that Moses and Elias had gone back to Heaven, and that Jesus Christ was standing there alone.

Jesus had wanted them to see Him in His Glory, as He would be in God's Presence; but He told them that they must not talk about it.

"Not till after I have risen from the dead."

They did not understand what He meant, but they were more sure than ever now that Jesus was indeed God's dear Son, for God had told them so Himself. But though they believed in Him, and all the people who brought Him their sick friends and relations to be healed, believed in Him too, there were a great many wicked men who did not believe in Him, and were always finding fault with what He said, and did.

One Sunday morning, Jesus took a walk through some corn-fields. The corn was ripe; it looked quite golden in the sun, and some of His disciples picked some ears of corn and rubbed it between their hands; then they blew away the husks, and put the corn in their mouths. They were hungry. People in that country were always allowed to gather a little corn as they went along, even if the corn-field did not belong to them.

As they were going along the footpath, they met some of the proud ill-natured men called Pharisees. They were always trying to find out if Jesus did wrong, and now when they saw His disciples eating corn, they stopped our Lord.

"Do You know what these men with You are doing?" they said angrily; "they have no right to pick corn on Sunday; it is against the law. They are breaking the law!"

Jesus spoke very gently to them. He reminded them that long, long ago a servant of God's, who was a King, had taken bread from the Temple when he was hungry, and then He said:

"I made Sunday for men to rest, and I am the Master of Sunday; so what I allow to be done on that day, is right."

They were still more angry with Him then.

Jesus was on His way to a little church near. He went on, and these Pharisees followed Him to see what He would do. After the service was over, a poor man with a bad hand crept up close

to Jesus. He could not stretch out his hand or move it. It was like a dead hand; it was of no use to him; he could not eat with it, or take hold of a stick, or pick a flower.

The Pharisees knew that this poor man had come to church that day, because he had heard that Jesus was going to be there, and he was hoping that he might be healed.

So they said in a loud voice:

"Is it right to heal people on Sunday?"

Jesus turned to them and answered:

"Suppose one of you have a sheep, and it falls down into a pit on Sunday, would you not take hold of it, and get it out? Isn't a man better than a sheep? It is right to do well on Sundays."

Then Jesus turned to the poor man.

"Stretch forth thine hand."

He stretched it out. A few minutes before, it hung lifeless by his side; now as he tried to do what Jesus told him, he found it was suddenly quite well, as strong and whole as his other arm and hand. Jesus had healed him by a word.

The Pharisees went away angrier still, because Jesus had made a sick man well on Sunday. And they got together and talked of how they could kill Jesus.

But Jesus knew it; and He quietly went away to another part of the country.

A little time after this, He was walking to a country village with His disciples, when in the

distance they saw ten men. These men were full of sores, for they were lepers, and they cried out: "Unclean, unclean, unclean!"

The disciples did not want to pass these poor men; nobody liked to go near them, but kept away as far from them as they could. The poor lepers dare not come near Jesus, but they cried out now as loud as they could:

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

They were so afraid that He might pass down another road before He came to them, and they had heard of one leper who had been cured by Him.

Jesus walked on, till He got close to them and then He said very quietly to them:

"Go, show yourselves to the priests."

I expect they felt very disappointed; they hoped that Jesus would put His Hand out, and touch them and heal them. They might have said:

"It is no good going to the priests as we are. They won't let us come near them. If we were well, we would go at once; for then they would tell people that we were well and clean."

But when Jesus spoke, people always felt they must do what He told them. He spoke so lovingly, and yet so commandingly. So these lepers turned back, and went along the road that led to the village. And as they were walking along, a wonderful, happy feeling came over them. They looked at each other, and they saw that all their painful sores and spots had gone! They were

quite, quite well! How glad and joyful they were then! They hurried along now; they meant to go to the priests, and then to their friends, and tell them all that had happened. But one of them stopped still in the middle of the road. "Oh, how very good of the Master!" he said. "He has cured us. It is God who has sent Him to us. I must thank Him!" He came back to Jesus, and as he came, he looked up into the sky, and thanked God in a loud voice for having healed him. Then he fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus and gave Him thanks for having made him well.

Jesus looked round at His disciples, and said:

"Were there not ten of these lepers cleansed? But where are the nine? Only this stranger has returned to thank God!"

Then Jesus said to the grateful man:

"Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

How ungrateful of the others, was it not, to go off and never thank Jesus for having made them well! And the only man who was grateful was a Samaritan. He did not live in Jerusalem, and was a stranger, and had not been taught about God as the Jews had.

Sometimes people were so grateful, and so fond of Jesus, that they followed Him everywhere day after day, hearing Him speak and seeing Him do wonderful miracles.

One day a man came running after Jesus.

"Lord," he said; "I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest."

Jesus told him rather sadly, as He had told another man once:

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head."

He wanted the man to know that he would have to suffer if he followed Him. Jesus knew what it was to be cold, and hungry, and tired day after day. He never knew where He would get a bed to lie upon. He moved about from villages to towns, and by the sea, and over the sea, going wherever He could do most good, and help people in trouble. And very often He did not go to bed at all, but went up into a mountain by Himself, where He could be alone and pray to God. He never got any quiet moments in the daytime, and could never be alone, for crowds of people were always following Him everywhere.

Sometimes people did not want to follow Him.

He said to a man once:

"Follow Me."

And the man, who said he loved Jesus, and wanted to be one of His disciples, now hung back, and made an excuse:

"Let me first go home and bury my father," he said.

I am afraid he was not speaking the truth. If

his father had been dead, he would not have come away from home as he had.

And another whom Jesus called said:

"Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go home, and say good-bye to everybody."

He was not ready, like Peter, and James, and John, to follow Jesus gladly and joyfully at once, leaving everything behind them.

And Jesus said rather sadly:

"No man who ploughs looks back, and the man who looks back when told to follow, is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

One day when Jesus had been praying in a certain place, His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. They knew how their Master spent long nights in prayer; and however tired He was when He began to pray, when He finished, He always looked very happy and very rested. They began to see that talking to His Father always did Him good, but they were not quite sure how they ought to speak to God, and what they ought to say when they prayed.

Then Jesus gave them this beautiful prayer. We say it in church on Sundays.

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our Daily Bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver

us from evil: For Thine is the Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory, For ever and ever. Amen."

Jesus now talked to them about praying. He said things that made them smile. He said:

"If a hungry boy asked his father for some bread, would that father pick up a hard stone and tell him to eat it?

"If he asked his father for some fish, would he give him a horrid writhing serpent to eat?

"If he asked for an egg, would he give him a scorpion, which would sting him?"

Of course he would not. "And if fathers down here only give good food to their children," Jesus said, "do you not think your Heavenly Father will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Of course He will. And He told His disciples to go away into a quiet corner and pray to God in secret. Some of the Jews were very fond of praying out loud in the streets, for people to see how good they were. Jesus told a little story about two men praying once. He told it because some people near Him were boasting how much better they were than their neighbors. And so He said:

"Two men went up to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, the other a publican.

"The Pharisee stood up proudly, and said:

"'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, and wicked in every way. I thank Thee I am not even like this publican.

"'I fast twice in the week. I give money to the poor, and a tenth part of all I possess!'"

He was very pleased with himself, was he not?

The poor wicked publican, standing far off from the Pharisee, because he felt not fit to go near him, would not even lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his breast, and said:

"God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Then Jesus said that the poor publican made the best prayer, and God listened to him and blessed him. God does not like conceited, boastful people; He likes them to be meek and humble, and think little of themselves, not be puffed up with pride as that Pharisee was.

Jesus told His disciples they need not say long prayers, but ask God for what they wanted, just as you run to your father, and ask him to give you anything you want. He told them that God knows before we pray, what things we want, but He likes us to ask for them, and then if they are good for us, He gives them to us.

One day, Jesus was sitting in one of the outer rooms in the Temple in Jerusalem. Crowds of people passed through here, because there were big money-boxes fastened to the walls, and everyone who went into God's House, was supposed to give some gift to God.

Jesus sat quietly by, noticing the people slipping their money into the boxes. Rich people swept by, and put in several bits of gold; some put in silver;

and presently there came a poor widow woman. Her husband had died, and she was left alone to earn what money she could. She was very, very poor, and that morning before coming out of her house, she had looked to see what she could give to God. She had only two tiny bits of money in the world, the two together would make a farthing, but she felt she loved God, and she must give Him all she could.

So with her precious money in her hand, she went up to the box, and with a happy smile slipped it in. She never thought that anyone would see, or know how much it was. She was ashamed that it was so little.

Jesus looked round at His disciples, who were standing near Him.

"Do you see the poor widow?" He asked them; "she has given to God more than anybody else; more than the richest of the people who have put in the treasury. For they only gave a little of their abundance; and she has put in every bit of money that she has."

Jesus knew that her little sum of money was bigger in God's sight than all the gold and silver of the rich people.

IX

STORIES OF THE KINGDOM

WHEN Jesus preached to the people and taught them about God, and God's Kingdom, and how they ought to live, they wanted to be in that Kingdom, He told them a lot of stories, so as to interest them, and make them understand. Little children followed Him about as well as men and women, and they listened, and loved hearing the stories.

This is one of the stories that Jesus told when He was preaching from a boat close to the sea-shore. And I think as He sat in the boat, His eye must have caught sight of a man walking slowly along a field in the distance. He had a basket slung over his arm, and as he walked along, he kept dipping his hand into the basket, and scattering seed out of it as he walked.

So Jesus began:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

Then Jesus told the people how the seed fell into different kinds of places.

Some of the seed fell on the little footpath across the field where everybody walked. Now I expect you know what seeds are like. Little brown pods

which are buried in the earth, and come up in the springtime, and turn into flowers, and corn, and vegetables. But they must be buried in the earth if they are to grow. This seed fell on the path; and presently some people came along, and trod upon the seeds, and crushed them, and then some hungry sparrows came along. "Why, here is a dinner for us," they said; and they gobbled up the seeds as fast as they could. So that seed came to nothing.

As the man scattered the seed, some fell among stones and rocks. There was just a little earth on the top of the stones, and the seeds sprang up very quickly here, for the stones were nice and warm, and it seemed easy to push their little green shoots up through the scanty earth. They pushed themselves up in the early morning, but by and by, the sun got hotter and hotter. It burnt and scorched their little new tender leaves; they had no proper roots, so they fell over on their sides, withered up, and died. So that seed came to nothing.

Now as the sower passed along, he came to a clump of bramble bushes full of nasty thorns. Some of the seed he was scattering fell into these thorny bushes. They tried to come up, and they did come up a little, but the thorns choked them. They had no air to breathe; the young brambles were coming up, and they took up all the room. So this seed came to nothing.

But the sower went on sowing his seed, and now some fell into nice soft ground, and it took root in it first, and then pushed itself steadily out of the earth, up into the sweet fresh air and sunshine. By and by, the man who sowed, came along, and found he had most beautiful crops coming up. The seed he had sowed, had made hundreds more seeds when they came up. And the sower smiled and was well pleased with his seed.

What a strange little story, is it not? Why did Jesus tell it? When the people were gone away, His disciples said they did not understand it, and asked Him to explain it to them. And then Jesus told them that the earth was peoples' hearts and God's Word was like seed, and dropped into peoples' hearts, and made those people like fruit bushes, and fruit trees, bearing fruit to God. Some peoples' hearts were like the roadway, they did not listen properly to God, and so the devil Satan, came like the sparrows, and took away the seed, before it had time to do the people any good. And then other people listened a little, but did not bury the seed deep in their hearts; and they began very quickly to be good, and then someone laughed at them and they gave it up and were naughtier than ever. Others hear God's Word, and try to live as they are told to; but troubles come, or pleasure, and like the thorns, they fill up their hearts, and choke the good seed. But the seed that fell into good ground, is God's Word falling into

peoples' hearts, and they listen, and try to understand and do what God says. These people bear fruit for God.

Jesus meant that boys and girls who try to be good, and do what they ought, please God as much as if they were an apple tree which gives its master hundreds of rosy apples every year. Jesus told the people also that they must be in earnest when they come into God's Kingdom.

He said a man one day was going across a field, when he saw something shining and bright in the corner of it. He stooped down, and made a hole, and tried to pull it out. He found that deep in the ground of that field, a lot of golden and silver things had been buried. He wanted very much to dig these up. If he got them, he would be a rich man. But how could he dig in another man's field? He must get hold of the field for himself. That was the only way. So he went away, smiling at the thought of what he had found. And he asked if he could buy the field, and how much money it would cost; and then he went home, and sold all his books and furniture, because he had not enough without to buy it. He sold everything he had; he was quite determined to have that hidden treasure in the field. And then he went joyfully and bought that field, and got all those precious treasures with it.

Another man was a merchant. He travelled about the world looking for pearls. When he

found a good one, he would buy it, and then take it into the town and sell it at some big shop, or sell it to some very rich man. Of course, he would get a good deal more money for it, than he gave for it. One day he came upon a man who had found the most beautiful pearl! He had never seen such a lovely one before. The man who showed it to him told him he had found it in an oyster shell. He went down to the bottom of the sea for these oysters; it was his trade, but he had never had such a big beautiful pearl before.

"I *must* have it," said the merchant.

The man said he must have a tremendous lot of money for it, because it was such a precious pearl—a pearl of great price.

The merchant got out his bags of money and began counting his money out. Alas! He had not nearly enough!

"Keep it for me," he said; "while I go home, and get some more money."

So he went home, and sold all his things, just like the other man; and then he took the long journey again, and brought the big sum of money that was required. He did not mind how much money he paid for it, and how much trouble he took, as long as he got it. Jesus told these stories to show that we must take trouble, and give up all we have, if necessary, to become the children of God's Kingdom.

One day a lot of wicked people drew near, and

began listening to Jesus. The Pharisees were shocked that Jesus had anything to do with such people; they found fault with Him for speaking to them, and going into their houses, and eating food with them. Jesus wanted to show them that He had come down from Heaven to make wicked people good, and if they had lost their way to God and Heaven, He would find them, and put them on the right road again.

So He told them three stories; one about a bit of silver, the other about a sheep, the other about a bad son, and they were all lost for a time.

He told them about the sheep first.

One day, He said, a man who had a hundred sheep, lost one of them. When he came to count them in the evening, before putting them into his fold safe for the night, he found he had only ninety-nine sheep. One was missing. He counted again to make sure; then he shut up the ninety-nine sheep safely, put on his thick coat, and instead of going home to supper, and to bed, he went out in the dark and cold, to look for the missing one. He told his wife and neighbors about it. Some of them said: "Oh, don't trouble, if it's lost; it is its own fault. Leave it alone."

"Oh, no," said the man, "I want it. It belongs to me. I love it. I won't lose it like this."

So off he went, right into the wilderness, where the sheep had been feeding in the daytime. He went through bushes, scratching his hands and feet

with the thorns; he went up and down the hills, calling gently all the time; he got very tired and cold himself, and was very hungry, but he never thought of going home.

He must find this lost sheep. All night he searched, and then towards morning, he suddenly found it. Poor, silly, frightened sheep! it may have tumbled over the rocks, and hurt its foot; it may have been down by the riverside caught in a bramble bush. Jesus did not say exactly where it was, but the good shepherd lifted it carefully up in his arms, and carried it along on his shoulders. It was so tired and frightened that it could not walk; it had run away, till it could run no longer, and was nearly dead with cold and tiredness. The shepherd went along now, singing as he walked. He was so delighted that he had found his sheep at last! When he got home that morning, he called all his friends:

"Come and see my poor lost sheep. It would have died if I had not found it. Be glad with me. My heart is full of joy! How glad I am that I searched till I found it!"

And everyone told him how glad they were, and rejoiced with him. For he had found the sheep that was lost. Isn't that a nice little story?

The next is about a poor woman. Now she had ten pieces of silver money made into a necklace, and hung round her neck. She was very proud and careful of this necklace. The women in those

days used to wear what they valued most round their necks and arms. It was a safe way to wear their money. One day her necklace broke, and little pieces of silver money scattered all over the place. She picked them up, and put them together again, but she found she had nine pieces instead of ten. One piece was lost. Nowhere could it be found! She was in tears. She told her friends and neighbors that her necklace would never be complete without the ten pieces. They helped her to look at first, but soon got tired, and left her. One advised her to sweep out every corner of her house, for it must have rolled away into some dark corner.

So when they had gone, she began to sweep; but first, she lighted a candle. Her little house was very dark. In her country the sun was so hot, that people never made very big windows; they wanted their rooms cool and dark, for they lived chiefly out of doors, and did their baking, and washing, and work, always out of doors. They only went inside when the sun was hot, or when they wanted to rest. Well—she got her candle, and she set to work. She would not have any dinner or tea, she let everything go; and she took her broom, and in every room and every corner she swept, looking for the lost bit of silver. And then at last, with a glad cry, she found it in a dark corner of her room. She was down on her knees at once. Pick-

ing it up, she ran outside the house, and called to her friends:

"It's found! It's found! Be glad with me! I've found the piece of silver that I lost!"

And they all clapped their hands with delight. They were so glad that she had found it!

After both these stories Jesus said:

"And when poor sinful men and women get lost from God, and find themselves; when they come back happy with Me into the Kingdom, then there is joy in Heaven among the angels there. The angels rejoice more over the one lost sheep, and the one bit of lost silver, than over those that have never been lost at all."

And this is the story of the bad son who was lost.

There was once a very kind, good father. He was very rich, and he had a lot of servants, and cattle, and money; and his two boys had a very happy home. The eldest boy was very quiet and steady, and a little bit of a prig. He always did the right thing, and said the right thing, and never got into trouble; but the youngest was a little scamp, always in mischief, always wanting to have adventures, and hating to be shut up in the house. He was always in trouble over his lessons, and his father often used to talk to him and tell him that he must steady down. As he grew older, he grew wilder; he said the life at home was too quiet for him, he wanted to go away and see the world. He

wanted to have plenty of fun and see life. And at last one day he came to his father, and said:

"Father, give me my money now that belongs to me, and let me go away and see the world. I will come back again. I am so tired of this quiet, dull place. We see nobody but ourselves. I want to have a good time while I am young."

Now the father was very fond of his naughty boy, and he feared that if he went away from home, he would get into bad company. And yet he felt it was best to let him go. He would not force a son of his to live always at home. He hoped he would soon tire of travelling about, and come home again. So he agreed to give him all the money that was his share, and let him have it to spend as he liked.

And a few days afterwards, when he had got his money, this wilful boy gathered all his belongings together, and left his home. He went off in good spirits; did not mind leaving his father, who loved him so, and told his brother, that he pitied him being left behind in that dull old hole! Off he went, into a country far away, spending his money right and left as he went. He at last got into a town, and made friends with a wild lot of young men. They were only too pleased to make him spend his money, and they ate and drank together, and went to bad places to amuse themselves, and had what they called a very jolly time. By and by the boy's money began to come to an

end. It could not last forever, and then his friends dropped away from him. He was no more fun, when he could not spend money on them. Everything seemed to go against him now. There was a famine in the country in which he was. Food was very dear to buy, and he had very little money to buy with. He sold his things, and then his clothes got shabby, and he could not buy new ones. He began to go without his dinner; he got pale and thin. What should he do? He would starve if he went on like this. His good time was over, and he was miserable; without a friend, without a home.

The time came when his last penny was gone. Then he thought he must find work to do, or he would die. So one day, he went to a farmer, and asked him if he would let him work in his fields for him. The farmer looked at the broken-down, ragged boy, and then he said:

"You aren't fit to be with my laborers, but I'll send you into my fields to look after my pigs."

So he went into the fields, and took care of the pigs. He had to feed them; and, do you know, he was so hungry that he would like to have eaten the husks and acorns that the pigs were eating! Nobody took pity on him; nobody asked him into their houses to have a nice hot dinner; and every day he grew thinner and weaker from want of good food. He was too miserable to care what became of him at first, but one day when he was sit-

ting down, and watching the pigs feeding greedily, he came to his right senses. He remembered that far away, he had a good home, and a loving father. And he suddenly said to himself:

"How foolish I am! My father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I, his son, am dying of hunger! I will get up and go back home to my father! I will say: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am not fit to be called your son. Make me one of your servants, and let me serve you like a servant!'"

He got up from the grass, and went to the farmer and told him he was going home. He took the little money which he had earned with him, and he tramped along the roads, and begged his way home. It was a long, long way, but every mile he trudged brought him nearer. He was very sorry for all his wildness and wickedness now; he began to remember that he had never written to his father. He wondered if he were still alive. How he hoped he was! Would he be very angry with him? Would he shut the door in his face? Would he be ashamed of him, when he saw him in ragged clothes?

At last he came in sight of his home. He saw the dear old house standing surrounded by its gardens and fields. He saw the cows and sheep in the meadows, and his eyes began to fill with tears. How could he have run away from such a beautiful

home? He felt that if he got back into it again, he would never, never want to leave it.

He was a long way off from the house, when he saw a man hastening down the drive, as if he were coming to meet him. Could anyone be expecting him? Be waiting for him? Be glad to see him? It looked—yes, it looked like his father. In another moment he saw it was. Yes, his father, who had never left off missing him from the time he left home, had seen him in the distance, and had known that this ragged, miserable-looking beggar was his son. He had left home a bright, jolly-looking boy; a boy sure of himself, scornful of his home, and longing to get away from it. Now he was coming back, a starving, ragged beggar!

Day after day, the father had hoped for news of his boy, but none came. He seemed quite lost to him. He missed his laugh and chatter; his merry face, and his naughty, tiresome ways. At last he began to fear he was dead, and yet every day he watched and waited for his return.

Now he held open his arms, and clasped him close, and kissed him.

"Father," sobbed the poor boy; "I've sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

His father kissed him again, and took him back into the house. Then he called to his servants. His face was shining with joy.

"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him,

and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found."

They did all this. The poor, starving son was soon dressed in nice clothes, and seated down at the table, which was laden with good food. The servants began to play music, and dance. They all were very happy and merry.

Now the eldest son had been out in the fields all day, and he did not get home till rather late. When he came near the house, he could not think what had happened. He heard the music and the merry voices; what was his father doing? He had left him in the morning an unhappy, quiet old man. Was he giving a party? Had any visitors arrived? He called a servant to him, and asked what was going on, and the servant said:

"Thy brother has come home, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound."

Was not the eldest son glad to hear this good news? No, he was very angry and jealous. He wouldn't go into the room where they were feasting, but he turned away and sulked. Presently his father came out, and begged and entreated him to come in and join them.

Then he said angrily to his father:

"All these many years I have done all you told me and served you well. I have never been dis-

obedient, and yet, though I have been such a good son, you have never made a feast like this for me, so that I might be merry with my friends. You have never even killed a kid for me! But as soon as this wretched brother of mine, who has gone away and wasted all your money among wicked people—as soon as he comes home, you kill one of our prize calves—the fatted calf!"

The father said very gently:

"My son, you are always with me, and all that I have is thine. It is right for us to be merry and be glad. For this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

I hope that eldest son felt ashamed of himself, and went in to welcome his brother home.

Jesus told this story to show that God loves sinners. Even though men, and women, and children, run away from Him, and do what they ought not, God still loves them and waits for them to come back. And if they get into trouble, and are miserable, they must remember that if they go back to God, and say they are sorry, He will forgive them, and receive them as His long lost children. That father was so good and kind, that he forgave his boy at once, for he saw he was really sorry for his behavior, and he would never act so again. And God will do the same with us.

Is this not a nice story?

X

MORE WONDERFUL STORIES

HERE are some more stories that Jesus told when He was preaching.

One day there was a good King, whose son was going to marry. So the King began to make preparations for the wedding. He invited a great number of his friends to come to it; and then he ordered a most grand feast. His servants were getting it ready for days and days. The day came at last, but there seemed no sign of his friends. No guests arrived at the house. The King sent out his servants, to remind them of his invitation. He thought they had forgotten it. But they told the servants that they did not mean to come. The King did not understand this rudeness. He sent some other servants to them, and said:

"Tell them that I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come unto the marriage."

But his friends laughed, when the message was given to them, and made light of it, and went their ways, not taking any notice of the King's message. One went off to his farm, another to his shop; and then the others, when the servants said that they

ought not to treat their King like this, turned upon them, and beat them, and actually killed some of them.

Judgment came upon them afterwards; for when the King heard of the death of his faithful servants, and the cruel way in which they had been treated, he sent his soldiers, and destroyed all those wicked people, who had insulted him, and killed his servants.

Meanwhile, here was the wedding feast ready, and no guests! What could be done?

The King called his servants to him again.

"The wedding is ready, but they which were invited are unworthy. Go out into the streets, and into the highroads, and invite anybody you see there, to come to my son's marriage. If they are beggars, it does not matter. I will provide every guest with a wedding-dress, when they come to the house."

So the servants went out, and gathered as many people as they could find; old men and young, beggars, and tramps, and bad people, as well as good, and then they came back to the palace, bringing this crowd of strange guests with them.

Lots of these people were delighted at their good fortune.

"How kind of the King!" they said; and when they found that all their rags and shabbiness were going to be covered up with most beautiful wedding robes, they were still more pleased.

But there was one man among them, whose clothes were not shabby at all, and when he came to the doors of the palace, and was given his dress, he refused to have it.

"No," he said proudly. "I am not a ragged beggar. I am clean, and tidy, and quite respectably dressed. I don't want a new dress."

The servants tried to persuade him. They told him it would be very rude, and would offend the King, if he did not take what had been provided for him. But he would not listen to them, and went on into the house among the others. When he was sitting down at the feast, with all the other guests, he began to feel uncomfortable. Everyone but he, had most beautiful silk and satin robes; the grandeur of the palace, and the wedding feast, and the decorations, and all the beautiful dresses, made him look a perfect disgrace. He was the only shabby man there. And presently some doors were flung open, and the King himself appeared. He had come to welcome his guests. He stood there in his royal robes, looking down the long table, and noticing each stranger with a kind smile; then suddenly his smile disappeared, sternness came into his eyes. He had caught sight of the man without the wedding garment. There was a hush and silence all over the room, when the King spoke to him. His voice sounded so terribly stern and cold:

"Friend, how camest thou in hither? Not having a wedding garment?"

The man was speechless. What could he say? He had deeply insulted the King, by refusing his gift; he had disgraced his feast, by appearing there in his common working clothes. The dust of the highroad lay thick upon them, and he had no excuse to give, for he had been offered royal robes, and he had despised, and scorned them.

Then the King was dreadfully angry. He told his servants to take the man outside into the darkness of the night, and leave him there. He should not share in all the joys, and delights of the royal marriage.

Now, Jesus told this story for a purpose. He did not tell these stories just to amuse the people, but to teach them some lesson. God is our King, and He has invited us to come to His beautiful Home in Heaven, and into His unseen Kingdom now. Everything is ready for us, and yet some people laugh at good things, and will not listen to God's servants; they think they can do as they like, and do not want to go near God. And some think they do not want to have their naughty hearts covered with the white robe of goodness, which Jesus died to give us; and so they think they will creep into Heaven, because they are not so bad as some people. They will find out their mistake one day, as this proud man did.

The Jews were proud, and would not come into God's Kingdom in God's way; they thought they were good enough to come in their own way. And

they treated some of God's servants just as badly as this King's servants. Jesus wanted to warn them that God could not be treated so. That the day would come, when He must punish them for refusing His invitation.

Soon after this, Jesus began to tell the people, that though He would have to go back to Heaven soon, one day He would come back again on the earth, and make an end of all sin, and unhappiness. And He told them that they must always be ready, and watching, and waiting, for His coming again.

One day, He said, there was a wedding going on. Ten Virgins—that is young girls—were bridesmaids, and they were told that they must be dressed, and waiting for the bridegroom, and they must have lighted lamps in their hands. It was at night-time, and the streets were dark; but when the bridegroom came along the streets, they were to go out to meet him, and join his procession, and go to his house, and to the marriage feast with him.

Well—they got all ready, and waited and waited. The bridegroom did not come. It got later and later; and then they began to feel sleepy, and at last they lay down, "just for a moment or two," they said, and went fast asleep.

Now, five of these girls had got their lamps filled with oil ready for lighting. They lighted them, turned down the wicks, and put them down by their sides when they went to sleep. It was wise of

them to do this, for they knew they must not keep the bridegroom waiting. The other five were careless and foolish. They actually had hardly any oil in their lamps! They were too lazy to fill them; they said they would do it by and by, but that they thought the oil would last out. And then in the middle of the night, the cry came outside in the street:

"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

The cry woke them up.

Immediately they all turned to their lamps. Five of them commenced to trim them. They began to burn brightly. But the others came running to them:

"Oh, look here! Our lamps have gone out; what shall we do? Give us some of your oil! Quick! Quick! or we shall be late!"

"But we can't do that," the other girls said. "There isn't enough oil for both us and you. Go and buy some at once, for yourselves."

They rushed out to the shops, but while they were gone, the bridegroom came. The five wise girls went outside to meet him. Their lamps were burning brightly. They were ready and went into the bridegroom's house, and the door was shut.

After some time, the other foolish girls came knocking at the door.

"Lord, Lord, open to us!"

It was too late. They had not met the bride-

groom; they were not ready for him when he came; and so he would not let them come in now. He told them he did not know them. All his friends had met him, and were inside the house with him. How sorry and ashamed those girls were as they crept home! They missed all the enjoyment of the Feast, because they were not ready.

"Now," Jesus said to the people, "watch therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh."

Then He told them this story:

There was once a man who was leaving home. He was going into a far country, and he was going to be away a long time. He had a lot of servants, and he did not want them to be idle while he was away. So he called three of his head servants to him, and gave each of them some money of his, to take care of, and to use wisely for him. He gave to one five talents. One talent was as much as a great many pounds of our money, so he gave this servant a very big sum of money. He gave two talents to the next servant, and the third one only had one talent given to him. The master of these servants knew them very well; and he gave as much money to them, as he knew they were fit to use for him. Then he went away, and told them it would be a long time before he would come back.

The first servant set to work at once. He used his lord's money so wisely, and well, by buying things, and selling them again, like a shopkeeper

"HE HEARD THAT JESUS THE NAZARENE WAS COMING ALONG"

or merchant, that he doubled his money very soon. Instead of five talents, he now had ten.

The second servant did just the same. He had not so much money to spend, so he did not gain so much; but he doubled his lord's money too, and instead of two talents, he had four.

The third servant was lazy. Perhaps he was rather discontented because his master had only given him one talent.

"It is not worth while troubling over such a little money. I shall keep it for my master safe enough; but I am not going to trade with it, and make more out of it."

And then he wondered where he would keep it. And he thought he would hide it in the garden. So he went out, and dug a deep hole, and buried the talent. And then he forgot all about it, and did not work like the other servants did, but just enjoyed himself.

After a long time, the master of these servants came home. And then one morning, he told them to come to him, and give him an account of how they had spent his money.

He that had received the five talents came up, and said:

"Lord, thou gavest me five talents. Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more."

His Lord said to him:

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will

make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Then the next servant came up.

"Lord, thou gavest me two talents. Behold, I have gained two other talents, besides them."

His Lord said to him:

"Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make three ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And then the third servant came up. I think he was feeling a little bit ashamed of himself; he wished he had other talents to show for the one talent given him, and he wondered if he would be praised as the others were. He began to make excuses for himself.

"Lord, I know you are very careful, and hard, over your money; and you like to reap, where you have not sown, and gather where you have not strawed. So I was afraid. I did not want to lose or waste your money, and I went and hid it in the earth. Here it is, just as you gave it to me."

Then his lord was very angry with him.

"Thou wicked and lazy servant! Because thou knowest that I like my money to be used well, so as to be increased, thou oughtest to have put my money somewhere, so that I should have got more now from it."

And then he turned to one of his servants, and said:

"Take away his one talent from him, and give it to my servant who has the ten talents; and then cast him out of my service."

Why did Jesus tell this little story? To tell us that we must all use what God gives us for Him. Our health, our money, our cleverness, must all be used for God, and if we love Him, we shall gladly work for Him.

One day Peter came up to his Master and said:

"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Must I forgive him seven times?"

Jesus said:

"I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven."

And then our Lord told Peter this little story:

There was a King once, who was calling to account his servants. And one was brought to him, that owed him a lot of money; as much as ten thousand talents, which was thousands of pounds. This servant was not able to pay a penny of this big debt. He had spent all this money which belonged to the King, and he could not pay it back. What was to be done?

In those days people used to sell themselves to others as slaves. They used to say: "If you give me so many pounds, I will come, and be your servant for always." So the King said:

"If this man can't pay me what he owes me, he,

and his wife, and children, must be sold as slaves, and then I will get my money."

The servant fell down at his feet, and besought him:

"Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

He was in such grief, that the King was sorry for him. He knew what a terrible thing it would be for him to be sold as a slave, and so he determined he would forgive him, and let him go free. He knew he would never be able to pay him back, so he forgave him it all.

How happy and grateful that man must have felt! He had gone in to the King's presence, fearing he was going to be punished for not paying his debt, perhaps cast into prison, or sold as a slave. He came out as a free man—pardoned, as if he did not owe a penny in the world. And as he came out with a happy smiling face, he suddenly met a fellow servant who owed him a little money. Instantly his face changed. He looked furiously angry. He rushed at this man and took him by the throat, and said:

"Pay me what thou owest."

This poor servant fell down at his feet, and said:

"Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

That was just what he did, and said himself, when he was before the King.

Now, do not you think he ought to have for-

given this man, because he had been forgiven himself? And he had owed a great deal more money than this poor man had. Well, he did not forgive him. He took hold of him and dragged him off to prison, and he had him put inside, till he could pay his debts.

Now, the other servants of the King had seen all this, and they felt very sorry for the poor man in prison; and they went straight to the King, and told him about it.

The King was very angry. He called back the servant whom he had forgiven, and said to him:

"Oh, thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest it. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

And then the King took back his forgiveness, and he delivered this cruel man over to the police of those days, and said that they were to punish him as they thought he deserved, till he could pay all that he owed.

It served him right, did it not?

Then Jesus said to Peter, and to those who had been listening with him to this story:

"So shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses."

XI

THE GOOD SAMARITAN AND THE TWO RICH MEN

SOMETIMES when Jesus spoke to the people, He talked of the time that was coming one day, when they would see Him as their real King. He told them He was not always going to stay down on earth. He was going back to Heaven, but one day He would come down again, and be a Judge and a King.

He said:

"When the Son of Man will come in His Glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit upon the throne of His Glory."

And then He said that all the people in the world would come round Him then, and He would divide them all into two lots; just like a shepherd who has a lot of goats and sheep feeding in the field together all day, divides them at night, and puts the sheep in one fold, and the goats in another.

Jesus said that the good people who loved Him, and had tried to please Him, and follow Him, would be on His right Hand; and the other people who had only lived to please themselves, and had never tried to love Him, or follow Him, would be on His left Hand.

Then He would say to the people on His right Hand:

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, into the Kingdom which is ready for you. For I was hungry, and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me in. I was naked, and you clothed Me. I was sick, and ye visited Me. I was in prison, and ye came unto Me."

Then the good people will say:

"Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and feed Thee, and thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When did we see Thee as a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?"

They could not remember doing all these things to our Lord.

And Jesus, the King, will say:

"If you have done these things to any of My poor, and sick people in the world, you have done them unto Me."

And then He will turn with a stern face, to the people on His left side:

"Depart from Me. Go to the place where those people are, who love Me not: where Satan and his wicked spirits are. For I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in. Naked, and you clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not."

Then these people will be astonished. They could never remember being so unkind to Jesus. They will say:

"When did we not feed Thee, Lord, and clothe Thee, and take Thee in as a stranger, and visit Thee when sick and in prison?"

Then Jesus will say:

"Truly I say unto you, that because you never fed the poor hungry and thirsty people on earth; because you never took them in, when they had no home, or visited them when sick and in prison; because you have never done any of these things, you have never done them for Me."

And so at the last day, when Jesus comes again, He will take the people who have lived for Him, and for others, on earth, into His most beautiful Home in Heaven; and the people who have only lived to please themselves, will have to be shut outside, with all those who do not love God.

Jesus wanted to show us that we must be kind, and help others who are poorer than ourselves, if we want to please Him. And He will consider that we are helping Him, when we are helping them. Is not this a nice thought?

Jesus always helped the sick and the poor Himself. He never sent anyone away; and that was what made everyone love Him so.

Children liked to listen to these stories as well as grown-up people.

"Stories Jesus used to tell,
And all the children near,
Listened and remembered well,
The tales they came to hear."

One day a lawyer came to Jesus. He asked Him a question, but he did not really want to know the answer. He only wanted to see if Jesus would say anything, that he could make out was wrong, and tell the elders of the Jews about Him.

He said:

"Master, what shall I do to get eternal life?"

Jesus asked him what the Jewish law said about it.

The lawyer said, that the law said, we must love God with all our hearts and souls, and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Jesus said:

"You have answered right. This do and thou shalt live, for ever."

"Who is my neighbor?" he asked.

And then Jesus told this little story to show him that anyone who needed our help, is our neighbor. He said:

One day, a certain man took a journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. He had money with him, and as he went along a very lonely road, he began to wish he had some friend with him. He had heard that there were a good many robbers hiding among the high rocky hills on either side of the road, and he looked about him anxiously as he walked along.

Suddenly, before he had time to defend himself, the robbers rushed down upon him. He cried for mercy, but it was of no use. They beat him down to the ground, with great sticks, then emptied his pockets, and took away his money from him and even stripped him of his good clothes; then they left him lying on the road, bleeding, and half dead. They got back to their hiding-places in safety, and the poor man lay there groaning, in great pain. He did not know where he was, or what had happened to him. Can you fancy you see him lying there? Will no one come to his help? There seems nobody in sight. Listen! There are footsteps. Here is someone coming along in the distance! Now he will be helped. Yes—the man who is coming along is a priest. He teaches, and takes the services in God's Beautiful House, the Temple, in Jerusalem. He is a good man; he will be sure to help him. The priest comes up. He glances at the poor man lying on the ground, and hastily crosses the road away from him. "Another of these travellers been murdered by these robbers," he murmurs to himself; "I won't go near him. If he is dead, I shall make myself unclean. We priests must keep ourselves clean and holy."

He is a selfish and cruel man. He only thinks of himself; not of the poor traveller dying there. He goes on his way. Will no one take pity on this poor man?

Now here is somebody else! He also belongs

to the Temple, and takes part in the services there. He is a Levite. He comes up close to the man, and stands looking at him.

"I can do nothing," he says to himself. "He is dead, or very nearly dead. I can't stop. The robbers may come, and attack me if I am out late."

And he also goes to the other side of the road, and passes on.

What unkind men! They are not loving their neighbor, as themselves. If they had been lying there hurt, and nearly killed, would they like others to pass by and not help them? And yet both these men knew, and heard often in church, that if they loved God, they must love their neighbor also.

Now at last comes a Samaritan riding on a donkey. He stops as the other men did; but his eyes fill with tears, and great pity, and love fills his heart. He gets off his donkey, and lifts the poor traveller tenderly in his arms; then he gets his little flask of oil, and another flask of wine, and he cleans and soothes the nasty cuts about his head, and body, binding them up with strips of his own linen robe. And when the poor man's wounds have stopped bleeding, he lifts him tenderly upon his donkey, and putting his arm round him, supports him there, and leads the donkey gently along, till he gets to the first inn on the road. Then he takes him inside, puts him to bed, and gives him food, and nurses him, and stays with him all night.

The next morning, the poor traveller is much better; but he is not able to get up and go home, and this good Samaritan must go on his way. So he goes to the man of the house, the inn-keeper, and gives him some money.

"Take care of this poor, sick, wounded man," he says to him. "Nurse him, and feed him, and look after him, till he gets well enough to go to his own home; and whatever you spend more, I will repay to you, when I come this way again."

Then Jesus said to the lawyer: "Who was the real neighbor of those three men?"

The lawyer said, "The one that showed mercy."

Then Jesus said unto him:

"Go and do thou likewise."

Here is another little story:

There was once a man who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. Now the vineyard was where grapes grew, but the ground was so good for fruit trees, that this man expected that the new little fig tree would have a lot of figs upon it. His gardener planted it for him, and took care of it, and at the end of a year, when it was time for figs, the man went to gather them. There was not a single fig upon it!

"It is too soon. It has only been planted a year," said the gardener; "next year, we shall have some figs."

So the man went away, and waited for a whole year. Then he came to his fig tree again. There

were no figs on it. The man was very disappointed, and so was the gardener. They could not make it out. Other trees had figs; this one had none. So they waited one more year. When the master came round the third year, and found no figs again, he grew angry.

"Behold," he said to the gardener; "these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none! Cut it down! Why cumbereth it the ground?"

The gardener looked sad, and shook his head.

"Lord," he said, "let it alone one more year. I will dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well! And if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down."

So the tree was left; but Jesus did not say whether it bore figs the next year. It was given a last chance to do it.

Jesus wanted to show the people that God had planted them down here in the world, to grow fruit for Him, and if they were not doing it, they were no good at all.

God comes to see if His children are bearing fruit for Him; and if they do not, He waits very patiently, and gives them another chance. But one day He will see that they are only taking up the ground, and doing nothing; and then He will give them their last chance, and after that He will move them away. They will no longer be in His vineyard.

Jesus told another story something like this, to show us that we must not be selfish, and live to ourselves; and if we have a lot of money, we must spend some of it for God, and not keep it all to ourselves.

He said:

There was a rich man who had very big gardens, and a lot of corn-fields; and one year he got so much fruit, and so much corn, that he did not know what to do with it. It never struck him to give some of it away. No, he thought he would enjoy it all himself. What a greedy man!

He said to himself:

"What shall I do? I have no room to pack away all my apples, and pears, and pomegranates, and bananas, and oranges. My rooms are all full already with some of the fruit I had last year. I know what I will do! I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and in these big new barns, I will pack all my fruit, and all my corn, and everything I have. And I will then say to myself, and to my soul: 'Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for years. Now take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry!'"

This rich man thought that this was all his life was given to him for—to eat, drink, and enjoy himself. And when he had said this, God suddenly spoke to him:

"Thou, fool, this night thy soul shall be re-

quired of thee. Then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided?"

God meant to say that this very night he was going to die; he had built his barns, and stored up his fruit for nothing; for he would not live to enjoy them. Somebody else would have them, after he was dead.

And Jesus said after He had finished the story:

"This is what will happen to the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

"We lose what on ourselves we spend.
We have as treasure without end,
Whatever Lord to Thee we lend,
Who givest all."

This is another story about a rich man that Jesus told the people when He was talking to them.

There was once a very rich man. He had a lot of money and he spent it all on himself. He was a selfish, greedy man. He did not love God, and he did not love his neighbors. He never helped the poor. He dressed in clothes that kings might wear, in purple and fine linen; he had great feasts of food every day; and had the most costly things on his table.

When God gives money to people, and makes them rich, He expects them to use some of it in doing good. This rich man thought of nobody but himself. He lived in the most beautiful house,

had a lot of servants who waited upon him, and he had everything that money could buy. Now outside the gates of his house, was a poor sick beggar. He was too ill to work, and his relations used to carry him to the gates every day, and put him down on the ground, and leave him there. They told him he must beg for his food. I am afraid they were not very kind to him. He seemed as if he had not a friend in the world. And yet this beggar man loved God, and prayed to Him, so he had a Friend in Heaven. Perhaps you wonder why he sat at this rich man's gate, but beggars often did that in the Jews' country. The servants would take them waste bits of food. This poor man was thankful to get any broken bits of meat, and crusts, from the rich man's table.

He lay there, clothed in rags, and his body full of sores. Sometimes the rich man saw him, as he drove out in his carriage, but it never entered his head to help him. He might have sent him to a hospital, where the doctors would have cured him. He might have sent him some of his old clothes. But he did nothing for him. It was only his servants, who fed him with bits that they might have thrown to the dogs.

There were always dogs prowling about the streets, picking up what food they could get; and the beggar man, whose name was Lazarus, made friends with some of these dogs. Perhaps he shared his crusts with them. Anyhow, they used

to come up, and lick his sores, as if they were fond of him and sorry for him.

It was very cold in the winter lying there, and the day came at last when there was no beggar at the gate. Lazarus was dying now. He was too ill to be carried there; and then one day he closed his eyes, and the angels flew down from Heaven, to bring his soul to God. What a happy time the beggar was going to have now! He would never be cold or hungry any more, and never be in pain again. We are told that Abraham, a very old and faithful servant of God's, who had died many hundreds of years before, welcomed him above, and put his arms round him, and comforted him.

I daresay the rich man was glad when he heard that the beggar was dead. He did not like to see him outside his gate, when he drove in and out.

But the story says very soon afterwards the rich man was taken ill, and told by his doctor that he must die. What good did his fine clothes do him then? What good did his big dinners, and all his pleasures do for him?

They were no good at all. All the money in the world cannot keep people from dying, when God sends for them; and this rich man had never loved God, and had no wish to go to Heaven.

So when he opened his eyes in the other world, he was not among God's people at all; he was not near God. He was far away with other people like himself; selfish wicked people, who only lived on

earth to please themselves. He was not happy like the beggar now; he was in a place of torment, and he was miserable. God let him have a sight of the happy place where Lazarus was, but there seemed as if there was a great deep hole, or gulf between them. The rich man saw Abraham, and he recognized the beggar. Then he cried with a loud voice:

"Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue."

Even now he was selfish towards Lazarus; he expected him to leave his happiness, and come over to him, and try to make him more comfortable.

And then Abraham spoke to him:

"Son, remember thou in thy lifetime receivedst good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Besides, there is a great gulf fixed between us. We cannot come to you. And you cannot come to us."

Now here, is the only nice thing we hear about this rich man. He had five brothers all alive on earth; they were just as careless and wicked as he had been, and he thinks of them now. He asks Abraham to send someone to tell them, what an awful place they would come to, unless they altered their ways, and turned to God. But Abraham said:

"They have the Bible to tell them about God,

and God's prophets warn them of what will happen, if they will not serve God."

"But," said the rich man; "if one went to them from the dead, they would repent."

Abraham said:

"If they won't hear God's servants who preach to them, they won't be persuaded to be good, though one rose from the dead, and spoke to them!"

Here the story ends. It is a happy one and a sad one. It has a happy end for Lazarus the beggar, because he loved God. It has a sad end for the rich man, because he only loved himself, and his money.

XXII

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

WE are now going to hear about a few more people who were healed. One day, Jesus went some distance off to some towns, that lay on the edge of the great ocean. The people here were not Jews, but heathens, and He wanted to show them, that He was their Saviour, as well as of the Jews.

As He went along, a woman met Him. She was in trouble, and cried out:

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

The poor woman's daughter was suffering from having a wicked spirit inside her; no one could quiet her, and her mother had heard of the wonders Jesus did, and came with haste to meet Him.

It was very strange, but Jesus walked on, and answered her not a word; He took no notice of her.

The woman cried out louder still: "Have mercy on me! Hear me!"

She followed Jesus up the road, making a great noise. She was in dead earnest, and she meant to

go on calling out, till she was heard. The disciples tried to stop her, and push her away. She would not move. Then they said to Jesus:

"Send her away; she crieth after us."

Then Jesus spoke, and said that He was sent to help the Jews, God's own people. This woman was a heathen.

Of course, He was trying her faith. He wanted to see if she was really in earnest, and really believed in Him.

She came up close to Him now, and fell down at His feet, and worshipped Him.

"Lord, help me," she prayed.

Jesus answered her still coldly:

"It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs."

"Truth, Lord," she said.

She knew the Jews would call her a Gentile dog; they would not help her or have anything to do with her; but she still expected Jesus to help her.

"Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table," she said.

She meant that she would be satisfied, if Jesus gave her crumbs. Ah! He meant to do more than that!

Now He turned to her, with His beautiful happy smile.

"O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee as thou wilt."

That was quite enough for the woman; Jesus

had told her that her wish about her daughter was given to her.

He added:

"The devil is gone out of thy daughter."

She hurried home with a thankful, happy heart. Her daughter had been too ill to bring to Jesus. She was rushing wildly about and hurting herself, and everyone who came near her. Now when her mother returned home, she found her lying quietly on her bed, with a happy, peaceful smile on her face. She spoke to her, and she answered her at once. She was quite well. Jesus had cured her, though He had neither seen her nor touched her. The next person He cured, was a deaf and dumb man. He could not hear; he could not speak; and his friends brought him to Jesus. There was a great crowd round Jesus, so He took the poor man by the hand, and led him out of the crowd. He gently put His fingers on his ears, then He touched his tongue, and then He looked up into the blue sky above them.

"Be opened," He said.

The man began to speak at once. He could hear perfectly. He was so happy now, that he ran about telling everyone, how he had been cured.

We have not time to hear about everyone whom Jesus cured, but we will hear about one poor blind beggar.

Jesus was one day coming away from a town called Jericho, with His disciples, and great crowds

of people. Some way off, a blind man was sitting by the side of the road begging. His name was Bartimæus; he was very poor, and people who passed by took pity on him, and would give him some money sometimes. As he sat there, he heard the tramp of many feet, and a murmur of a great many voices, and he asked someone near him, who was coming. He may have thought that it was the King, or a lot of Roman soldiers; he could not see; he could only hear.

"It is Jesus of Nazareth, the great prophet of God," said someone. The blind man was overcome with joy. He had longed to meet Jesus. He had heard of other blind men who had received sight; and one who had been born blind, had actually been cured, and saw for the first time in his life. Now was his chance! It had come at last. So he cried out at the top of his voice:

"Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

People who were standing by him, waiting to see Jesus pass by, did not like the noise he was making.

"Be quiet," they said. "Hold thy peace."

The blind man would not be quiet. He shouted all the louder. He was determined that Jesus should hear him, and then he thought he might be healed.

Of course, Jesus heard him; it was difficult to see him, for the crowd was all round him now. But He said:

"Bring him to Me."

People near Bartimæus, now spoke a little more kindly to him.

"Be of good comfort. Rise, He calleth thee."

Bartimæus got up, and was in such a hurry, that he threw off his ragged cloak, and ran straight towards Jesus. He could not see, but he was helped by people near him. Everyone in the place knew him. He had been sitting by the roadside for years.

Then Jesus spoke to him:

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

The blind man trembled all over, with excitement and hope.

"Lord," he said; "that I might receive my sight."

Jesus said, "Go thy way. Thy faith hath made thee whole."

In a moment, sight came back to him. How delicious it was to see the sun again, and the grass, and the trees, and all the people! But the one Bartimæus wanted to see most, was Jesus Himself. He could not take his eyes off that beautiful, tender, comforting face. He did not run away home to see his friends and relations, and tell them the good news that he was cured. Many of the sick people did that, first of all. No; Bartimæus could not leave Jesus. He had given him his sight; he had heard so much about Him; now he determined to follow Him, wherever He went.

And so Bartimæus followed Him rejoicingly along the road.

Now there was a little village called Bethany, outside Jerusalem, and in it lived some friends of Jesus'. They were two sisters, called Martha, and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. They had a nice little home; and when Jesus passed by on His way to Jerusalem, He generally stayed with them for the night. It was very quiet and restful there, and Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus all loved Jesus very, very much, and He loved them.

The sisters were not much alike. Martha was very busy, and rather fussy, and noisy; Mary very quiet, and gentle. One day Jesus went to stay with them. He came in and took them by surprise, for they did not expect Him. They took Him into their best room, and made Him rest in a comfortable seat; and then Mary, with joy in her eyes, and a happy smile upon her lips, came and sat down on the rug at His feet.

"Will you talk to me about God, and about Heaven?" she asked. And Jesus smiled upon her tenderly, and began to talk to her at once.

Martha's one thought was to get a nice supper ready for her dear Lord. And she bustled about, laying the table, and bringing in the cups, and dishes, and plates, and then going out into the kitchen to cook some nice little hot dish, and make some hot cakes. She wanted to have everything as

nice as possible; but it was the end of the day, and she was a little tired.

Every time she went into the room, she saw Mary sitting close to Jesus, drinking in His words with joy and eagerness. Martha was not very fond of sitting still herself; she liked to be moving about, but she got cross when she saw that Mary took no notice of her, and left her to get the supper by herself; and at last her temper rose and got the better of her; she came into the room, and spoke a little impatiently:

"Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore, that she help me!"

That was very rude and unkind of Martha; she ought to have been glad that Mary was talking to their Guest, and making Him rest comfortably.

Jesus looked up, and said to Martha very gently, but rather sadly:

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Jesus would rather that Martha had been satisfied with giving Him a plainer supper, and a little more of herself. He loved them both, and He wanted to make them good, and happy, by teaching them more about God, and of Himself.

Well, one day, Jesus received a message from Martha, and Mary, telling Him that Lazarus was

very dangerously ill. They hoped He would come off at once, and heal him. But Jesus said to His disciples, when he received the message:

"This sickness is not unto death; it has been sent to Lazarus, so that God shall be thanked and praised."

And He stayed for two days longer in the place where He was.

In those two days, Lazarus grew worse, and worse, and died. Martha and Mary were broken-hearted.

At the end of two days, Jesus said to His disciples:

"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I must go to wake him up."

"But he'll do well if he sleeps," said the disciples.

"Lazarus is dead," said Jesus gravely, "and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, because I want you to believe in Me more; now let us go to him."

It was a long journey, and Jesus did not hurry. When they came near Bethany at last, they soon heard the news. Lazarus was dead, and had been buried four days ago. How sad! The poor sisters felt that Jesus had forgotten them. They had sent for Him, and He would not come; now a lot of their friends were with them, trying to comfort them. Before Jesus had reached the house, some neighbor came in, and told Martha that He was

coming near the village. Martha jumped up at once, and ran out to meet Him. Mary was so ill with grief and despair, that she sat still, and cried on.

Martha came to Jesus; her eyes were red with crying; she stretched out her arms to Him, and gave a bitter cry:

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Then something in His face, such a soft loving smile, such solemn gladness in His eyes, made her add hastily:

"I know even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, He will give it Thee."

Jesus said:

"Thy brother shall rise again."

"I know he will rise at the Resurrection," said Martha, in a hopeless tone. Jesus told her that people who believed in Him, could never die. He was speaking of their souls, but Martha did not understand; she only told Jesus that she believed that He was Christ the Son of God; and then she went back to the house, and whispered in Mary's ear that Jesus had arrived, and was calling for her. As soon as Mary heard that, she went to meet Jesus as fast as her feet would take her; she found Him just outside the village, and threw herself down at His feet.

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." And then she burst into fresh tears,

and cried as if her heart were breaking. Other people began to cry in sympathy with her.

"Where have you laid him?" asked Jesus, looking very troubled, and the tears rising in His eyes.

"Lord, come and see."

They led Him to a cave in the garden, with a great stone before it; and as Jesus went along with Mary, He wept with her. He was so sorry for her.

But when He came to the grave, He raised His head, and spoke very firmly:

"Take ye away the stone."

Martha hurried forward; she did not want it done; it was of no use; her brother had been dead four days. But Jesus insisted, and they obeyed Him. Then He lifted up His eyes to the blue sky above Him, and began to pray to God, and then in a loud voice He cried out:

"Lazarus, come forth!"

There was a movement inside the cave. Can you think how Martha and Mary felt? And then the next minute, Lazarus walked out of the cave, smiling and well, though he was all tied up with his grave clothes.

"Loose him and let him go," said Jesus.

There was great joy and wonder over this. Martha and Mary received their dear brother back again from the dead, and at first could hardly believe it was he.

A lot of the Jews ran to tell some of their rulers

about this wonderful miracle. Others stayed with Jesus, for they now firmly believed He was the Son of God.

Was not this a happy ending to such a sad story?

XIII

JESUS AND HIS LAST PASSOVER

WE have been hearing about all the sick people who came to Jesus to be healed, and about the dead being raised to life. Now we will hear about other people who came to Jesus, because they loved Him; not for anything that they could get from Him. And I think we will begin with some little children first.

One bright day, Jesus had been busy teaching, and talking to some people in a place called Judea. Presently along the road, came a number of women with babies in their arms, and little children toddling by their sides. Now little children always loved our Lord, and He loved them. They would run along the roads after Him, and sometimes He would stop and speak to them. One day, He was talking to His disciples about being humble, and He called a little child to Him. The little boy had been standing near, listening to Jesus, and trying to understand what He said. Jesus took him up in His arms very lovingly and put him down in the middle of the circle round Him. He told His disciples that they must humble themselves, and be like this little boy, who believed everything Jesus

told him. The mothers in this part of the country knew how Jesus loved children; but they wanted Him to take them up in His arms, and bless them, before He went away from them. So they brought all their children along; big, and little. They felt that if Jesus touched them, He would make them good, and holy, as they ought to be, and that they would grow up good men, and women. The disciples were impatient when they saw the children coming to the Saviour; they did not think it was worth while noticing children. Their Master had more important work than that. So they pushed them away very crossly and told the mothers not to trouble Jesus with them. Jesus turned round at once with a very grave, displeased face, and He scolded His disciples for being so unkind.

"Suffer the little children to come to Me," He said. And then He held out His loving arms, and the children crowded into them. He blessed them, and as He put His hands on their soft curly heads, He smiled down upon them, and made the mothers' hearts full of joy. Would you not like to have been lifted into His arms and been blessed?

I expect the bigger children remembered that day for the rest of their lives.

"I think, when I read the sweet story of old,
How when Jesus was here among men
He once called little children as lambs to His Fold,
I should like to have been with them then.
I wish that His Hands had been placed on my head,
That His arms had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when he said,
Let the little ones come unto Me."

Soon after this, a young man in very rich clothes, came running up to Jesus. People stared at him. They knew he was a very rich young ruler, and had a big beautiful house, and lands, and a lot of money. But he just knelt down as any ragged beggar might, at the feet of Jesus.

"Good Master," he said very humbly; "what shall I do to get life, which will last for ever?"

"Keep all God's commandments perfectly," said Jesus; "if you do that, you will be perfectly holy, and be able to live with God for ever."

"Oh, I've done that," said the young man quickly; "ever since I was a tiny boy, I have kept the commandments."

I think he did not know what he was saying; and Jesus just showed him that he did not love God as thoroughly as he ought. He said to him:

"One thing thou lackest. Go and sell all thou hast, give it to the poor, and come, take up thy cross and follow Me."

One of the chief commandments of God is to love Him with all our hearts and souls. If this young man had done that, he would have cheerfully sold his big house, and carriages, and horses, and all his fine things, given the money to the poor, and come to Jesus and followed Him, because Jesus was God's dear Son. The disciples had forsaken all they had, to follow Jesus. This young man could not, and would not. He went away sorrowful. He thought he loved Jesus; but not enough

to give up everything for His sake. He went back to his big house, and all his possessions, for he loved them more than Jesus.

Now we will hear about another man, who wanted to see Jesus. This was another rich man, but he had got all his money in a dishonest way. He was a man who collected money from the people for the Roman taxes, and he cheated them when he did so, taking more from them than he ought. His name was Zacchæus. He had heard a great deal about Jesus, and he wanted very much to see Him. One day, he heard that Jesus was coming through Jericho, where he lived. He ran out of his house, and was determined to see Him now; but he was a short little man, and the crowd, waiting to see Jesus pass, would not give him a chance. He could not see over their heads, and they would not let him get in front of them, so he looked about him, and saw a big tree by the roadside. He did not care who saw him; he just climbed up into that tree, like a boy, and hid himself among the thick leaves. "Now," he thought, "I shall be able to see Him, and no one will see me."

Jesus came slowly along, and the crowds were on each side of Him. All at once, just under the big tree, Jesus looked up, and Zacchæus knew he was discovered! He was startled, and amazed when Jesus called him by his name:

"Zacchæus," He said, and I expect He looked up at the little man with a tender smile; "make

haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Zacchæus could hardly believe his ears! What! This great and wonderful Jesus coming to his house as a guest! What an honor and joy for him! People despised him because he was a publican and tax-gatherer. Jesus did not. Zacchæus scrambled down from his tree, delighted. He hurried on in front, to tell his wife to prepare a meal for his honored guest; and then he stood at his door, and received Jesus joyfully. People in the crowd grumbled:

"He has gone to be a guest with a wicked man," they said. But after Jesus had been talking with Zacchæus for a little, the poor man began to feel as if he would like to turn over a new leaf, and be good. So he told Jesus he would give half his money away to the poor, and pay back four times as much money as he had taken from the people, whom he had cheated. Jesus saw he was really sorry for his bad ways, and He said:

"This day is salvation come to this house, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus was kind to bad people, because He wanted to make them good.

One day He was invited to supper, with a Jew who thought himself very good and holy.

A poor sad woman who had done a lot of wrong things in her life, heard He was there. She had

often listened to His preaching, and had learnt to love Jesus very much. She went and bought some very beautiful scented ointment, and then crept into the house. In those days, the houses were open to the street, and when it was hot, people had their meals in their open gardens, and court-yards. She soon found her way to where Jesus was sitting, and then she was so overcome that she began to cry; she stood behind Him, and her tears fell fast. She felt she was a sinner, and wanted her sins to be forgiven, but she loved Jesus so much, that she ventured to do something. She bent over his feet, and her tears fell so fast on them, that she had to wipe them away, and she took her beautiful long hair to do it with. Then she kissed them, and put her precious ointment upon them. I daresay our Lord's feet were sore and aching. He walked and stood upon them so much; and the ointment soothed and cooled them.

Simon the Jew, who was giving Jesus supper, was very angry when he saw this woman doing what she did. He said she was wasting her money, buying that precious ointment, and she had no business to come near Jesus, as she had been a very wicked woman.

But Jesus smiled on the woman, and He told Simon that the woman had loved Him more, and been kinder to Him than Simon had.

"I entered thy house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed My feet with

tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; she hath not ceased to kiss my feet since I came in."

And then He told the woman that her sins, which were many, were all forgiven, for her love for Him, showed how sorry she was for her past life. He told her to go in peace.

She went away, sobbing for joy now. How kind and gentle and good our Lord had been with her! She felt that she would never, never forget His Love.

It was very strange that when Jesus Christ was so good and holy, and lived only to make other people well, and good, and happy, that there should have been so many of the Jews who hated Him, and even tried to kill Him. The Jews who hated Him most were the Pharisees, and scribes, and rulers of the people. These men thought themselves very good, and holy; and as they were teachers of the Bible, and of God, they were very angry when Jesus taught the people differently to themselves. Jesus spoke of the love of God; they never did. They were determined to kill Him, if they could, for they said He pretended to be God's Son, when He was only a carpenter's son. Several times they sent people to take Him prisoner, and bring Him to them; once they tried to kill Him by throwing stones at Him, but each time Jesus escaped. God would not let them touch Him before His time.

Jesus knew that the time would come for Him to be killed, and He often told His disciples about it, but they never seemed to understand Him. Before Jesus left Heaven, He had said He was willing to come, and be born as a little baby on this earth, and live a good life, trusting in God for everything, to show us how we ought to live on earth. And He was also willing to die, because by His death, He could be punished for our sins, and we could be forgiven, and go to Heaven when we die. One tiny drop of the life-blood of the Holy Son of God, would be enough to save the whole world. And we are told that He did not spare Himself, but poured out His soul unto death. This is difficult for you to understand, but you will when you get older.

Jesus had taught the people about God for three years. The crowds of people who followed Him about, more than once, wanted to make Him King over them, but Jesus told them His Kingdom was not of this world. When you get older, you will be able to read the wonderful stories, that Jesus told about the Kingdom of Heaven. We have not room in this book to tell all His stories; we are telling you about His life; not His Teaching.

And now the time had come for Jesus to come up to Jerusalem, and die. The Passover Feast was going to be kept, and He told His disciples He meant to go up to it. They did not want Him to go; for they knew now that the Pharisees in Jeru-

salem wanted to kill Him. But Jesus, we are told, set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem. Lots of other people were going up to keep the Feast. When they reached the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of His disciples on in front, to get a young donkey for Him to ride on. He knew just where it would be found. He told them He would ride into Jerusalem, not walk. They soon came back with the donkey, and put some of their long cloaks across its back, for their Master to sit upon. Then Jesus rode into Jerusalem, His disciples walking by His side; but the crowds of people now began to get very excited. Some came out of Jerusalem to meet Jesus, for they had heard He was coming; they began to think at last they might make Him their King. They threw down their cloaks and garments on the road, for His donkey to tread upon; they cut down branches from the trees and scattered them before Him, and the children, waving palm branches in their hands, shouted at the top of their voices:

"Hosanna! Hosanna! to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

People in the city looked out of their windows, when they heard this shouting, and ran out of the shops, and began to ask:

"Who is this?"

The crowds answered: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee!"

The Pharisees soon heard that Jesus was in Jerusalem; they met together, and talked about getting hold of Him, and killing Him, but they were afraid of the people. All day long, Jesus stayed in the Temple, teaching the people; in the evening, He went outside the town, at the quiet Mount of Olives, where He spent all the night in praying to God.

The next day, His disciples came to Him, and asked Him where they should kill and eat their lamb. For it was the Feast of the Passover. What house were they to lodge in to do it? Jesus told them to go into the town, and they would meet a man carrying a jug of water.

"Follow him," Jesus said; "and when he goes into a house, you go after him, and ask the master of the house to show you his guest-chamber. He will show you a large room upstairs all ready for us. Prepare for the Passover there."

So the disciples did as they were told; and in the evening Jesus came with the twelve disciples up to that room.

Now I must tell you that a few days before, one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, had slipped quietly away from his Master. He went to the Pharisees, who were plotting how to take Jesus prisoner, and he said to them:

"What will ye give me if I deliver Him to you?"

And they told him they would give him thirty bits of silver.

It was not a big sum of money, but Judas loved money. We can hardly believe that after living with Jesus these three years, and being loved by Him, he could do such a wicked cruel thing, as to give his Master up to those who wanted to kill Him. But he made up his mind he would do it. He went about with Jesus all these days, just waiting his opportunity to betray Him.

And now Judas was actually eating the Passover Supper with Jesus, and pretending he was as fond of Him as the others. What a wicked, wicked man!

Did Jesus know he was wicked? Yes, He knew all about it. He had always known that Judas was not what he pretended to be.

They were all round that table in the upper room, and after a part of the supper was over, Jesus got a big jug and basin, that had been put there for them to wash in, and He poured some water out, and tied a towel round His waist, and then knelt before each of His disciples, and began to wash their dusty, aching feet, and dry them with a towel, just like a poor humble slave or servant would do. The disciples were very uncomfortable at their dear Master doing this. When Jesus came to Peter, he said:

"Thou shalt never wash my feet."

He couldn't bear his Master to do such servant's

work. Jesus said: "If I wash you not, you cannot belong to Me."

"Oh," said Peter; "wash me all over then, Lord."

"No," said Jesus; "only your feet. I have washed you already, and most of you are clean, but not all."

Jesus meant that He had already washed their hearts clean, except Judas's. He was unclean. And then He told them that just as He had washed their feet, they must wash other peoples' feet. They must be ready to do any kindness for others, and never be too proud to serve them just as servants would do. As they sat eating the Passover lamb, Jesus told His disciples that He was like the Passover lamb; that He was going to be killed for the sins of the world, and His blood, sprinkled on the hearts of His people, would save them from everlasting death. His disciples could not understand Him, but they began to feel frightened and sad. They saw that Jesus was troubled. At last He said straight out to them:

"Do you know that one of you is going to betray Me, to give Me up to be killed?"

They were horrified. They all began to look at each other, and wonder which of them could be so wicked.

John was sitting next to Jesus; he was almost lying in His arms. He whispered to Jesus:

"Lord, who is it?"

Jesus said: "It's the one to whom I will give this bit of bread, when I have dipped it in the dish."

And He stretched out His hand and gave the bit of bread to Judas, and then He said to him:

"Go and do what you mean to do, at once."

Judas knew then that Jesus knew all about him. He hurried out of the room, with his head hanging down. He may even at this last minute have been sorry, and half-inclined to give up his wicked plan, but he had let Satan tempt him so often, that now he could not drive him out of his heart; and Satan made him go straight to the wicked Jews, and tell them that he knew Jesus would be out in a garden near, that evening, and that he would bring them to Him there.

This beautiful garden was called the Garden of Gethsemane. People could go and walk in it, and sit down under the trees, and enjoy the cool shade when the sun was hot. It was very quiet at night; hardly anyone used it then, and Jesus was in the habit of going there to pray, before He went to bed. When Judas had gone away, Jesus took some bread and some wine; and He gave both to His disciples in a very solemn way. He blessed the bread and broke it, and gave them each a piece, and said that the bread was His Body; and then He blessed the wine, and gave it to them, and told them that it was His Blood. And then He told them that He always wished them to eat bread and

drink wine together, and think of this night, when He gave it to them.

"My body is going to die; My blood is going to be shed for you. Remember it, and have supper like this together, when I am gone, and think of Me."

Then He talked to them in a beautiful way of how He must leave them; but that they must not be unhappy, as He was going away to Heaven to get a place ready there for them, and that one day He would come back, and take them there.

When He did leave them, He told them that God the Holy Spirit would come down from Heaven and comfort them. And that He would stay with them, and live in their hearts, and show them how to be good, and remind them of all that He had told them to do.

The disciples listened with sad faces. They began to be afraid that something dreadful was going to happen, and yet they did not know what.

Then Jesus asked them to sing a hymn with Him. And when it was over, He took them downstairs, out of doors across the streets, to the dark, silent garden. As they were walking there, Jesus said:

"I am going to die very soon; I am going to be betrayed into the hands of My enemies to-night. And you will all forsake and leave Me."

Peter said very quickly:

"Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death."

Jesus looked at him sadly.

"I tell thee, Peter, that this day, even in this night before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice!"

Peter was hurt and rather angry.

"If I should die with Thee," he said earnestly; "I will not deny Thee in any wise."

And the other disciples all cried out, saying that they would never, never leave Him.

They little thought what cowards they were going to be!

And now they came to a little brook, and crossed over it. The garden was reached. All seemed peaceful and still, but the disciples followed their Master into it, with troubled hearts.

XIV

JESUS UPON THE CROSS

WHEN they were in the garden, Jesus told His disciples to sit down in a certain place, and wait for Him; but He asked Peter, and James, and John, to come with Him, while He prayed to God. He went farther on, to a very quiet corner, and now His disciples saw that He began to look very troubled and unhappy. Perhaps they were anxious and frightened; they may have gone on talking to Him, and asking Him questions; and Jesus felt He must be silent, as He had a dreadful time in front of Him, and He wanted to prepare Himself for it. So He presently said:

"My soul is very sorrowful, wait here, and pray with Me."

He went a little farther, and begged God to help him, and if it was possible, not to let Him suffer as much as He expected to, but He ended His prayer by saying: "Yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Presently He came back to Peter, and the others. Instead of praying to God for Him, they had fallen fast asleep. They were very tired, and generally went to bed before this time, as it was now getting late. Jesus said to them:

"What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?

"BEARING IN HIS SOUL THE SIN OF ALL THE WORLD"

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Three times He came to them, but each time, He found them sleeping. It seemed that when He was in the greatest trouble, nobody cared enough to keep awake, to comfort, and help Him.

But as He knelt alone, praying to God, with tears dropping down His cheeks, God sent an angel to comfort Him. And the last time He came to His disciples, He said:

"Rise up now. Let us be going. He who is betraying Me comes near."

The disciples started up. They heard voices now, and in the distance saw lanterns and torches waving in the air, and heard the clash of swords, and soldiers marching. They went back to where the other disciples were waiting for them. Jesus stood among them, very quiet and still. He was waiting.

And then the wicked Judas crept up very softly, and before anyone could stop him, he had kissed Jesus, saying, "Hail, Master," as if he loved Him.

Do you know why he kissed Jesus? Because, being dark, the soldiers who had come to take Him prisoner, might easily have caught the wrong man by mistake, and so Judas told them, "Whoever I shall kiss, is the Man you want. Hold Him fast!"

When Jesus received Judas's kiss He said very sadly:

"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Then the soldiers all crowded round, and seized Jesus.

Peter was so angry, that he got hold of one of their swords, and dashed at a man who was taking hold of Jesus, and cut off his ear.

Jesus actually put out His loving hand, and touched the man's ear, and it was healed at once. And then He said:

"Put up thy sword. Do you think I cannot pray to God to send Me hundreds of angels, and He would do it at once? Here I am, you can take Me, but do not take my disciples. Let them go their way."

The crowd of angry men, and soldiers were beginning to lay hold of the disciples, but when Jesus said that, they let them go, and then sudden fright seized the disciples, and everyone of them took to their heels, and fled out of the garden for their lives. Even brave Peter, who said he was ready to die with Jesus, ran away.

Now they bound Jesus with ropes, and they led Him out of the garden, and through the dark streets of Jerusalem, to the High Priest's Palace. Here a lot of Jesus' enemies were sitting, waiting for Him to be brought as a prisoner before them. It was in the middle of the night, but they did not mind sitting up. They knew they dare not take hold of Jesus in the daytime, because the peo-

ple loved Him, and might have fought for Him. So they took Him when all His friends were fast asleep in their beds. Could Jesus have got away from them if He had chosen?

Yes, but He would not save Himself. He meant to die, because He was to die to save us from punishment of sin.

The little hymn says:

"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to Heav'n,
Saved by His precious Blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin,
He only could unlock the gate
Of Heav'n, and let us in."

When they came to the palace, they took Jesus into a big room, and the High Priest spoke to Him very angrily:

"Are you the Son of God?" he asked.

Jesus said very quietly:

"You are right. I am. And one day you will see Me come down from Heaven with great power."

Then they were very angry.

"He shall die for saying such words! He deserves to die! As soon as the morning comes, we will take Him to Pilate the Judge, and he will have Him killed."

Then the soldiers, and the bad people round, began to knock Jesus about. They slapped and beat Him, and even spat in His face. He said

never a word, but bore it all with great quietness. So the long night passed.

But where were the frightened disciples?

Well, Peter soon stopped running away. When he saw Jesus being led through the streets, he followed Him, only a long way behind. Another disciple, whom I think was John, followed too, and when the High Priest's Palace was reached, he went in at the door after Jesus, for he knew the High Priest, and the servants let him in. Presently he came back to the door, and beckoned Peter in. He asked a maid-servant to allow him to come in. She looked up into Peter's face, and said: "Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples?"

And Peter said very hurriedly, and looking very frightened:

"No, I am not."

He was both a liar and a coward. How sad!

Then, as it was very cold, Peter drew near to the big fire in the hall and warmed himself at it with the other servants. His heart was miserable. He did not know what to do; and how he could get near Jesus. Presently the maid looked at him again. "This is one of them," she said; "he was with Jesus of Nazareth."

"I was not; I don't know Him," Peter said again. Then he grew more frightened, and went out into the porch. And when he got there he heard a cock crow. It was very early morning now.

Then another man came up to him.

"I am sure you belong to Jesus of Nazareth; I saw you in the garden."

Peter was so frightened that he began to curse, and to swear that he had never known Jesus.

And as he was speaking, again the cock crew.

From the porch where he was, he could just see into the big room where Jesus was. And at this moment, Jesus turned His head and looked at Peter.

Such a sorrowful, loving look! It flashed into Peter's mind then, how Jesus had said:

"This night before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

He went out into the street, and cried bitterly.

How could he have told such lies! How could he be ashamed of knowing Jesus, whom He loved so much!

It was Satan who tempted him to be so wicked. If he had been praying to God, when Jesus told him to, in the garden, and asking for help, instead of going to sleep, perhaps he would not have been so wicked now. Poor Peter! He had run away, and denied His dear Lord. He was very, very miserable. He felt he would never be happy again.

Very early the next morning, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews took Jesus off to Pontius Pilate, the Governor or Judge. Pilate sat on a high seat in the street. He asked Jesus a great many questions; and the wicked Jews, who hated Him, told a lot of lies about Him, and made Him out

to be a very dangerous man, and a man who ought to be hanged, or crucified. They said He was trying to make Himself a King, and would overthrow Pilate, if He became one, and everyone, in authority. Pilate did not want to say that Jesus must die, but the Jews were making such a noise, and were so furious, that he felt rather afraid of them. Wishing to save Jesus, he said: "Well, at this feast, we always set one prisoner free. We have another prisoner, who is sentenced to die; he is a very wicked robber, Barabbas. Now shall I let Jesus go free, or Barabbas?"

They all cried out "Barabbas."

Pilate was quite sure that Jesus was innocent; he knew that the Jews were envious of Him, because the people liked Him better than themselves, and listened to Him when He taught them. And just as he was sitting down in his seat, he got a message from his wife telling him that he must let Jesus go free, because of a dream that she had had about Him. So he took water, and washed his hands, and said to the Jews:

"I am innocent of this good man's death. You must see to it." But he knew, as a judge, he would have to do something; so he ordered Jesus to be scourged, and then he thought that would satisfy these cruel Jews.

So the soldiers took our Lord, and beat Him with knotted ropes, till His back was sore and bleeding, and then in a big hall, they all began to

ill-treat Him, and mock at Him. Jesus never said a word. The soldiers said:

"He says He is a King. We will make Him one." So they dressed Him up in some fine robes, and got some very prickly thorns off a tree in the garden, and twisted them round His head, so as to prick and hurt Him, pretending it was His crown, and they gave Him a rod to hold, and then drove Him out of the hall. Pilate saw Him; and showed Him to the people.

"Here is your King," he said.

He hoped they would be sorry to see our Lord so ill-used and beaten; and say it was enough punishment. But they yelled, and screamed, with all their might:

"Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

Then Pilate gave Jesus up to them; and they led Him away. Now when any slave, or very bad man, was condemned to death, they made a big wooden cross, and nailed him on it. Then they made a hole in the earth, and stood the cross upright in it, and left the man hanging there, till he died. This was how they meant to kill our Lord. They took Him along; got a cross ready for Him, and when they found He was too weak, and exhausted after His beating, and ill-treatment, to carry it Himself, they made a countryman, called Simon, carry it for Him.

And so they led Jesus through the streets; His cross going after Him; and a great company of

people, and of women followed, all crying, and wailing because they loved Him so. His frightened disciples were in that crowd, but where was Judas?

Well, when he found how Jesus was going to be tortured, and killed, he bitterly repented of his wickedness; and he took the thirty pieces of silver, which he had been given, for betraying Jesus into His enemies' hands, and he went off to the priests, and elders, and said:

"I've been very wicked; take back your money. Jesus is innocent. He must not die."

They laughed at him.

"We don't care whether you've been wicked or not. You must see to that!"

Judas dashed down the silver on the ground, before them, and went straight away to a lonely field, and hanged himself. That was the end of the traitor Judas Iscariot.

Now let us return to our Lord.

Outside the town, on the top of a green hill, were three wooden crosses standing up against the sky with three men hanging on them. Soldiers guarded the crosses, so that no one should try to touch them, or try to save the men who were dying on them. And they stripped Jesus of His clothes, and were dividing them up between them. Crowds of people covered the hill, some watching out of curiosity, some sobbing bitterly with grief. Perhaps a stranger passing by would ask:

"Who are these bad men being crucified? Are they thieves and murderers?"

The answer would be:

"Two are thieves of the worst kind; but the middle one is the gentle Holy Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of God. He told us He was God's own Son, and had come down from Heaven to visit us. He is dying because He said that, and the governor has written over His cross, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' Listen to those cruel men who are mocking him——"

The stranger went nearer.

"If Thou be the Son of God come down from the cross and save Thyself," shouted the wicked Jews.

Jesus looked sorrowfully at them. He could have come down so easily, but He was dying there for us, and He loved us too much to think of His own sufferings.

"They laugh at Him and mock Him!
They tell Him to 'come down,'
And leave that Cross of suffering
And change it for a Crown.

Why did He bear their mockings?
Was He the 'Mighty God,'
And could He have destroyed them
With one almighty word?

Yes, Jesus could have done it,
But let me tell you why
He *would* not use His power,
But chose to stay and die.

It was for *us* He suffered,
For *our* sins He died,
And not for ours only,
But all the world's beside!"

Suddenly, black clouds began to gather in the sky. The sun disappeared; it grew darker and darker until it was as dark as night. And yet it was in the very middle of the day. People began to be very frightened. They said that God must be angry with them, to take away the sun.

As Jesus hung on the cross, in the midst of great thirst and great pain, He still thought of others. Sometimes His lips moved in prayer, and people near the cross heard what He said. Once He prayed for the wicked people, who were killing Him.

"Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."

Once he looked down very lovingly upon his favorite disciple and His mother. They had both come up as close to Him as they could now. Their hearts were breaking. They had never thought that Jesus would really die like any other common man. They hoped up to the last minute, that He would save Himself. Jesus said to His mother: "Behold your son." And then He said to John: "Behold thy mother!"

In that way, He gave His poor mother into John's charge; and from that hour, John took her to his own home, and tried to be a son to her.

Once He spoke to one of the thieves beside Him. One of these men actually mocked Him, but the

other, in a wonderful way, believed that Jesus was God's Son and a King. He told his comrade that Jesus was suffering innocently, but that they were not. And then he looked at Jesus, and asked to be remembered when He came into His Kingdom. Jesus said:

"Truly I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

Then a little later, Jesus felt Himself getting weaker, and weaker, and His lips moved in prayer again:

"Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit."

Then just before He died, He cried out in a loud voice:

"It is finished."

And then He died.

As He died, the earth shook, and trembled all over. Great rocks split into little pieces. There was a terrible earthquake, and in the Temple the beautiful big curtain, that was there, was torn in pieces from top to bottom.

It was a terrible day, and one of the officers who was there on duty said:

"Truly this was the Son of God."

Yet even after Jesus was dead, a cruel soldier pierced His side with the point of his spear, to make sure He was really dead. And then when that was done, they took the cross down, and left it lying on the ground. And all the women who loved

Jesus, came and sat upon the ground by it, and wept over Him.

It was the blackest day in all their lives.

They could hardly believe even now, that their dear Saviour and Master was really dead—that they would never hear His loving voice, and see His beautiful smile again.

It seemed so terrible that He had been made to suffer so dreadfully, and be killed in such a shameful way, when He was so Holy and Good and Innocent. They could not understand it.

"BRIGHT SHINING FORMS WERE THERE . . . SAYING THAT JESUS HAD RISEN AND THE PLACE WAS EMPTY"

XV

A JOYFUL DAY

NOW there was a rich man, and a good man, called Joseph of Arimathea. He was one of the rulers of the Jews, but he loved Jesus with all his heart. He was very angry with the other rulers for taking Jesus to Pilate, but he could not prevent them from doing it. We are told that he "waited for the Kingdom of God." He had hoped up to the last that Jesus would not be killed, and would become a great King. He was a friend of Nicodemus', another ruler, who had come once to see Jesus, and talk to Him in the middle of the night. Joseph had a beautiful house and garden, and in his garden, was rather a strange thing. In a very quiet shady corner, almost hidden by the beautiful trees around it, he had built a lovely stone tomb for himself when he died. It was not like our graves in the churchyards. It was cut out of a big rock, and was like a tiny little room; only it had no windows in it, and only a great big stone for a door. Rich people often built their graves in their gardens before they died. Flowers grew round them, and birds sang in the trees above them.

Well, Joseph and Nicodemus were both disciples of Jesus, but they kept it secret, for they were rather afraid of the other Jews, who hated Jesus so. Now Joseph got quite bold. His heart was so full of love and sorrow for Jesus that he determined to bury Him in his own grave. He felt he would love to have his Lord's Body lying in his beautiful garden, and so he went straight off to Pilate, and asked him if he could take the Body of Jesus away from the cross, and bury it in his garden, as he had a grave ready there. Pilate said "Yes." Then he and Nicodemus came together, and they found our Lord's Body lying on the ground close to where His cross had been; and His mother and other women and friends, who loved Him dearly, were sobbing bitterly, as they bent over Him.

Joseph had brought some beautiful white linen with him, and Nicodemus had brought some sweet-smelling spices. They told the women what they were going to do; and then they gently and carefully wrapped up our Lord's Body in the linen, and put the spices upon Him, and then they carried Him very gently, and reverently along the road, and into Joseph's garden. The women followed, crying as they went. All the crowds of people that had been round the cross that day, had gone home now. Everyone was getting ready for their Sunday, which was coming.

It was a very quiet evening. The earthquake

and darkness had gone, and when they came into the garden it seemed a beautiful place for our Lord to be buried in. The flowers were smelling very sweet; it was cool and shady under the trees. The birds were just going to rest for the night. It was a strange, silent funeral, but everyone there had hearts full of love for Jesus. They were very, very unhappy. The women knew that they had lost their best Friend in the World. How could they learn to be good now their Master had left them? Joseph and Nicodemus were just as unhappy as the women were. When our Lord's Body had been laid down in this grave, Joseph had the big stone rolled across the doorway. It was too big for anyone to lift away, and it fitted tightly.

Then Joseph sorrowfully turned away; and told the women to go home. It was no use waiting there. The next day was the Jews' Sunday. Nobody came near graves on Sunday. They were busy going to church. Jesus was dead and buried, and it seemed as if there was an end of everything. So the poor women went back to their homes. But when they got back, they determined to get some more spices, and sweet-smelling ointment, and take it to the grave. They felt they would like to do something for their Master's tired dead body. So they prepared the ointment, and rested all the next day.

It was such a very sad Sunday! Peter and the other disciples did not know what to do; they felt

lost without their Master; they sobbed bitterly as they thought how they had forsaken Him at the last. They were so broken-hearted, so despairing, that they all forgot that Jesus had told them more than once, that He would die, but that He would not stay dead; He would rise again.

Jesus' enemies did not forget this. They felt that God had shown His anger at the Crucifixion, by sending the earthquake and darkness. Perhaps in some way, Jesus might come to life again, or His disciples might steal His Body, and tell the people that He had risen. So they went to Pilate, and asked that some soldiers might be sent to Joseph's garden, to seal up the door tight, and watch day and night, to see that nobody meddled with the grave. This was done. We are told, they "made the grave secure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

And now very early on the first day of the week, when Joseph's garden lay still and beautiful in the golden light of the rising sun, when the birds were awake and singing joyously, when some of the sweet flower-buds were just opening into flowers, the two women who had been preparing their spices and ointment, came to the gate of the garden. It was hardly light yet. They found the gate open, and slipped in quietly. They did not know about the soldiers guarding the grave, and they were wondering if they could get anyone to roll away the big stone for them. They knew they could not do

it themselves. But when they got to the grave the stone was rolled away. They were astonished. There were no soldiers near it. They peeped inside, but the body of Jesus was not there. They were frightened then. What had happened! Who had taken Him away? And then suddenly, close by their side, they saw two people in shining garments. It looked as if the sun was blazing upon them. They knew they must be angels, and fell on the ground before them, and covered their faces.

The angels said:

"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Don't you remember He used to tell you that He would be crucified, and buried, and then rise again on the third day?"

Then the angels disappeared. It seemed too good to be true; but the women remembered now, quite well, that Jesus did tell them He would rise from the dead. He was really alive after all. How wonderful! They ran out of the garden as fast as they could, and told the disciples about it.

But the garden had had an earlier visitor that morning. Another woman, named Mary, had come along. She was alone, and it was still dark. She was the woman who had washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. She came, and found the stone rolled away, and she ran away and told Peter and John.

"They have taken our Lord away," she said.

Peter and John rushed off at once, and she followed them more slowly. When they got to the grave, they went right in. There were the linen clothes that had been wrapped round Jesus, but His Body was not there. John's face got radiant with joy.

"I believe He is risen from the dead," he said. "He raised Lazarus from the grave. He is risen Himself."

They went home again, hoping and believing, but not quite sure. And later, they heard from the other women, of the angel's words.

But Mary did not go with them. She stood outside the grave, crying very much. It was all so dreadful, so sad! She did want to see her dear Master once again, and now His Body was not there. Then she stooped down, and looked into the grave again. She thought she saw a light. What do you think she saw?

Two angels in white robes. One was sitting where the head of Jesus had been; the other was sitting where His feet had been. They looked at her, and said:

"Woman, why weepest thou?"

Mary answered, sobbing:

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

And then the tears blinding her, she stumbled back. She did not wait for the angels to comfort her; she did not seem surprised to see them. She

was too miserable to care for anybody, or anything. And then in the dusky garden, she suddenly saw somebody else. It was a shadowy figure, but it spoke to her in a low voice.

"Woman, why weepest thou?"

The same question again. She thought it might be the gardener belonging to the place, and she said earnestly:

"Sir, if you've taken Him away; tell me where you have put Him, and I will take Him away."

She thought perhaps the rich people in this house and garden had only let Jesus rest there for a day or so. And she was determined that He should have a quiet grave of His Own, somewhere.

Then the unseen person said one word only, but that word sent the color into Mary's cheeks, and the joy light into her eyes.

"Mary."

She would know that loving voice anywhere. It was Jesus' voice, and this was Jesus Himself, standing there, close to her.

She turned round to Him breathlessly, and gasped out:

"Master."

She was going to throw herself down, and clasp His feet, but He moved away, and said very gently:

"Don't touch Me; I have not yet gone up to God; but go to My brothers, and tell them I am going up to My Father, and your Father, to My God and Your God."

He moved away from her; the bushes seemed to hide Him from her sight; but she had heard His living voice, she had seen Him! And she fled out of the garden to tell the glorious news.

What a happy day that was to the disciples! They had been inclined to wonder if Jesus had been the Son of God. Now they knew He was. They knew that they could still believe and hope in Him. The past dreadful days seemed like some bad dream. This day was a day of joy and gladness. Their Master was alive! They all talked together now, reminding each other of the many times that Jesus had told them, that He would rise again on the third day. He had been true to His Word. He had done it. They had been afraid that His beautiful life had been for nothing. He had died, without showing the world He was the Son of God. But now that He was risen from the dead, all the world would believe in Him, and in His words.

Yes; that wicked spirit Satan, had made the Jews kill Jesus, but God raised Him from the dead, to show that He was God, and could not be killed. What had happened was this. There was a sudden earthquake in Joseph's garden, and the soldiers guarding the grave, suddenly saw a bright shining angel come down from the sky, and roll back the stone from the door. The soldiers trembled, and shook, and were stunned. Afterwards, they made their way back to the Jews, and told

them that an angel had come to open the door, and that Jesus' Body had disappeared. And all who heard this, were very frightened and alarmed.

Now later that day, two of the disciples left Jerusalem, to go to their own home, which was in a little village, about seven miles off. These men were not among our Lord's twelve disciples, but they loved Jesus very much, and were very sad, and troubled about His crucifixion, and death.

They were going along through the pleasant valleys, and over the green hills, when suddenly a stranger joined them. He asked them why they were looking so sad, and what they were talking about; and then one of them said:

"You must be a stranger, not to know what things have been happening in Jerusalem."

"What things?" asked the stranger.

They told him all about Jesus.

"We hoped He was Christ, who had come to save all the Jews. But He was put to death three days ago, and some women this morning brought us strange news. They said they had been to His grave, and that He was not there, and they had seen angels there who told them He was still alive. Some of us went to the grave, but it was empty. We never saw a sign of Him."

The stranger said very earnestly:

"But don't you believe what your prophets taught you? That Christ must suffer, before He went back to Heaven?"

And then he talked to them, explaining all the places in the Bible, which spoke about Jesus; and as he talked, they began to feel much happier in their hearts. It was all true, of course it was! And if Jesus had died, and was risen, there was nothing to be unhappy about. They listened to this stranger. He seemed so wise, so full of pity for them; and he made it all so clear and simple, that they understood things, they had never understood before. When they at last reached their village, they felt they did not want him to leave them. He was going on farther, but they begged him to come and stay the night with them, for it was getting towards the evening.

So he went into their house with them, and they prepared a supper for him. Just as they were going to begin to eat, the stranger took the bread in his hands, prayed over it, and then broke it and gave it to them.

Why, that was just what Jesus always did! Nobody but He ever did that at meal times. They started up from their seats; their eyes now saw who it was. It was actually their dear Lord and Master Himself. There was no mistake about it. How stupid they had been not to recognize Him before! But as they sprang towards Him, with joyful smiles upon their faces, He disappeared. He went away from them. They said to each other:

"Did not our hearts burn within us while He

talked with us by the way, and while He explained the scripture to us?"

They were so excited to think that they had seen their risen Lord, that they got up at once, and walked all the way back to Jerusalem, that same evening. They felt they must tell the other disciples, that they had seen Jesus.

When they got to Jerusalem, they soon found out where the disciples were. They were gathered together with other friends of Jesus in an upstairs room in a house. And they had the doors close shut, because they were afraid of the wicked Jews coming to take them prisoners, because they were followers of Jesus. These two men slipped in very quietly, but the first thing that was said to them was:

"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Yes, Jesus had appeared to Peter; I expect Peter was so broken-hearted at having denied his Lord, that Jesus showed Himself to him to comfort him, and to let him know that He had forgiven him.

Then these two disciples told their story; how Jesus had walked and talked with them; how He had blessed their bread, and how then it was that they knew Him.

They were all talking eagerly together, when suddenly in the middle of the room appeared a figure of a man. It was not one of themselves, and

just at first, before they saw Him closely, they thought it was a ghost or spirit.

Then came the sweet, well-known tones of their Master:

"Peace be unto you. Why are ye troubled? Why do you think such frightened thoughts? Look at My hands, and feet, with the marks of the nails in them. Touch Me and see. A spirit hath not flesh, and bones, as ye see Me have."

They looked at the dear face of their Lord, and yet still were frightened, though joy shone in their eyes. Could it be? It must be Him!

Then Jesus looked round. They were just having their supper. He would show them that He was not a spirit.

"Have you any meat?" He asked.

They gave Him a piece of boiled fish, and some honey in the comb.

Jesus ate this quite naturally, and then they saw that He really was alive, and just as he used to be.

Then He bagan to talk to them, trying to make them understand, that He had done His Work, and must go back to Heaven, and that they must be His Messengers, and tell people about Him; and how He came down from Heaven, to die for their sins, and went back to Heaven when He had done it. He told them He must go back very soon.

They listened; and peace and joy filled their hearts. They were very, very happy now.

When Jesus left them, they were no longer sad.

They wiped their tears away, and did not feel lonely, and forsaken any more. They knew their dear Master was living, and any day might come and see them again.

"For Christ our Lord was buried once,
He died and rose again.
He conquered death, He left the grave,
And so will Christian men.

Because for our dear Saviour's sake
Our sins are all forgiven;
And Christians only fall asleep
To wake again in Heaven."

Now one of the disciples, Thomas, did not happen to be there that night, and when he was told what had happened he would not believe it.

"We have seen the Lord," they told him.

"I don't believe you have," he said. "Not really alive! He can't be. You dreamt it. God sent you a vision of Him, and you fancied it was really Himself!"

"But we did," they said; "He spoke to us."

Thomas shook his head:

"Unless I see Him myself, with the nail-marks in His hands and feet, and the hole which the soldier's spear made in His side, I will not believe! Unless I touch Him with my fingers, and feel the nail-marks, and put my hand into the hole in His side, I will not believe!"

This was wrong of Thomas, because he ought to have remembered that Jesus had said He would rise again, and lots of people had already seen Him.

But he was very miserable, and refused to be comforted; and he was the only unhappy one of the eleven disciples, who went about with Jesus.

About a week after, on a Sunday evening, Thomas joined the others at supper in the upstairs room.

They kept indoors a good deal, and were frightened to walk about the streets much, because of being noticed by the chief priests, who had killed our Lord.

Suddenly, just in the same quick unexpected way, Jesus stood in the midst of them.

"Peace be unto you," He said in His tender loving way.

Thomas started up. There was no mistake. This was no dream, no fancy! It was Jesus, with the same sweet holy eyes and smile, but perhaps with a little added sadness from all He had been through, and with something a little different, as if He were standing in golden sunshine.

And then Jesus looked straight at him, and Thomas hung his head in shame.

"Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands. And reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side. And be not faithless, but believing."

I think the tears must have come to Thomas's eyes. He cried out:

"My Lord and my God!"

And then Jesus said very gently to him, these words—and they are a great comfort to all of us

now, who have not been able to see Jesus with our eyes—

"Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

Now all the disciples had seen Jesus; and after that, He often came and visited them, telling them many things that He wished them to do, when He had gone away into Heaven to stay.

XVI

LAST DAYS

ONE evening, not very long afterwards, Peter told five or six of his friends that he meant to go fishing. They wanted fish for food, and to sell; and so get some money, for they were all very poor men. So they pushed off their fishing-boat into the sea, and tried hard to catch fish, but they could not do it; all night long they dragged their nets through the water, but there seemed no fishes near them. And when the sun rose the next morning they were a little party of tired disappointed men. I expect through that long night, they talked a great deal of their dear Master. How often they used to row Him about on the sea, how He had helped them sometimes to catch fish, and how once He had walked on the water to reach them, when they were in danger of being drowned!

Now as they pulled into the shore, they saw a stranger standing by the water's edge, as if he were waiting for them.

When they got near Him, He called out:

"Sirs, have you anything to eat?"

They said: "No."

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

"What, in this blazing sun, and close to the shore? What is the good of doing that? We shall find no fish here."

This is what they might have said; but somehow they felt they must do what this stranger told them.

Directly they threw their net overboard with a splash into the water, the fishes leapt into it. The net got heavier and heavier. They could not lift it back into the boat.

John, whom Jesus loved so, exclaimed to Peter:

"It is the Lord."

Peter sprang up with a joyful cry. He seized his fishing coat, slipped it on him, and plunged overboard into the sea, swimming and wading, till he reached the shore. He was the first to reach Jesus, but the others were not very long in following him; they came dragging the net full of fishes after them to the beach.

And when they all got there, they saw a little fire of coals, with some fish on it, already cooking, and some bread.

How nice and comfortable it was for the poor, tired, hungry fishermen to see a meal ready and waiting for them! Our Lord had prepared this pleasant little surprise for them, because He knew they were wet, and cold, and hungry, and He always loved to make people happy and comfortable. Now He said to them:

"Bring some of the fish which you have caught."

Peter went up to the net, and began getting the fish out of it.

How many do you think were there?

One hundred and fifty fishes, and they were all big fish. Yet though they made the net so heavy, it did not break.

They knew that this was another miracle of their Lord.

Then Jesus said:

"Come and dine."

Do you know, that though they knew quite well it was Jesus, they were shy of asking Him about Himself! Somehow since He had risen from the dead, they felt that though He was just as loving and kind as He had always been, and spoke in His natural voice, and ate and drank with them quite simply, yet in a way He was more like God, than He had ever been before, and they were a little shy with Him.

This was Jesus' party. He gave His disciples the food, and they all thoroughly enjoyed that dinner, by the bright little fire on the shore. They felt happy and strong again now. After the meal was over, Jesus walked up and down the shore, and Peter crept quietly after Him. He did love Him so very, very much! and he could not forget how he had denied Him; he knew that Jesus had forgiven him, but he felt that he wanted to have as much of Him as he possibly could.

Jesus looked at him now, rather gravely.

"Peter, lovest thou Me more than these friends of yours?"

"Yes, Lord," Peter answers quickly. "Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Jesus said:

"Feed My lambs."

What did Jesus mean? He meant that Peter must try to tell little children about Him and His love; that he must teach them, and feed their little souls with all His Holy good words, for He was their Shepherd.

They walked on, then Jesus spoke again:

"Peter, lovest thou Me?"

Peter said more earnestly than before:

"Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Jesus said:

"Feed My sheep."

Then as they walked on, Jesus said for the third time:

"Peter, lovest thou Me?"

Peter nearly cried; it seemed as if he could not make Jesus believe that he loved Him.

A little time ago Peter would have begun to boast.

"Love You! I'm ready to die for You. If all the others leave off loving You, I won't! I'll do anything in the world for You!"

But Peter had learnt his lesson; he was very humble now. He felt that as he had denied Jesus

three times, it was only just that Jesus should ask him now three times, if he loved Him. He just looked up at Jesus with misty pitiful eyes, and said:

"Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou *knowest* that I love Thee."

Jesus smiled upon him, but He said again:

"Feed My sheep."

Do you think Peter ever forgot this quiet little talk? Did he ever forget to preach to people and teach them about Jesus? Never!

And now Jesus went on to talk to him, about his future. He told Peter that when he was a boy, he always liked to go everywhere he wanted to, and do things as he liked, and Peter knew this was true. He had always done and said things quickly, without thinking whether they were right or not. Jesus went on to say that when he was old, his hands would be stretched out on the cross, and he would be bound and taken where he did not want to go.

And this was true, for many years after, Peter was taken by wicked men, and crucified like his Master.

And then Jesus looked at Peter in His loving way, and said, "Follow Me."

That was all Peter had to do for the rest of his life, just follow his Master's steps, even to the very death he died.

As they talked, Peter heard steps behind them;

it was John, who was longing to talk to Jesus too, and he was following them. Peter said in his quick way:

"Lord, and what will John do?"

It was not Peter's business to know about John's future. Jesus told him so.

"If I wish him to wait on the earth, till I come down from Heaven again, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

The little talk was over, but Peter never forgot it. And when Jesus left the disciples that day, they began to look forward to the next time, when they would see Him. They were always thinking about Him, because they loved Him so.

Now I must tell you about one more day, when Jesus met His disciples, and talked to them.

This time, He took them out of Jerusalem, as far as the little village of Bethany. He had been telling them that the time had come for Him to go back to Heaven and stay there; that though He would still love them, and see them, and be with them, that they would see Him no more with their eyes, till they came to Heaven to be with Him.

And He told them He wanted them to stay at Jerusalem till God the Holy spirit came to live with them in their hearts, and teach them what to do, and say. Then after that, they must go all over the world, telling people that He had died for their sins, and that they must be baptized, and give their

hearts to Him, and love Him and serve Him all their lives.

Then they asked Him when He was going to be King over the world, and make everyone serve Him.

Jesus said:

"It is not for you to know the time, when I shall come in power; I will come back one day."

And then He lifted up His hands, and in a very sweet solemn way blessed them all.

As they looked up at Him, they saw His feet slowly move up off the earth, and then very slowly, He rose in the air. He had no wings; He did not fly up; but just went slowly up in the sky to God, and His hands were stretched out as He went, and the most beautiful smile was upon His face! They stood silent, watching, watching! And then a soft white cloud came across the sunny sky, and seemed to cover their Master altogether from their sight. When the cloud passed, they looked and looked, but Jesus had gone right up to Heaven, to His own beautiful Home.

How the angels must have welcomed Him! What a glorious burst of music and singing and praise must have been in Heaven that day! How glad they were to have their own King back in His right place again.

The poor disciples still stood straining their eyes, and wondering if Jesus had gone away for good.

Suddenly two angels in shining white robes stood by them.

"Why do you stand here gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into Heaven!"

The disciples listened, and a great joy filled their hearts. They had seen their Lord go up to Heaven, and now they made up their minds to do exactly as He had told them. They went back to Jerusalem, and were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God.

They soon began to preach to people about Jesus; and from that day to this, all over the world, men and women, servants and disciples of our Lord, are telling everybody the wonderful story of Jesus, the most wonderful story in the world.

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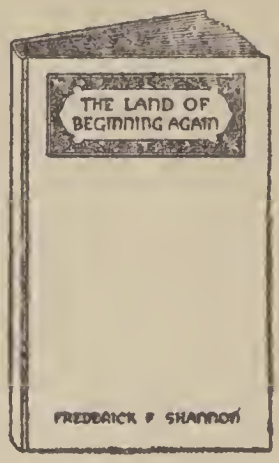

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